DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 031 PS 025 945

AUTHOR	Funkhouser, Janie E.; Gonzales, Miriam R.; Moles, Oliver C.
TITLE	Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches. An Idea Book.
INSTITUTION	Policy Studies Associates, Inc., Washington, DC.; National Inst. on the Education of At-Risk Students (ED/OERI), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	AR-97-7022
ISBN	ISBN-0-16-049254-8
PUB DATE	1997-10-00
NOTE	153p.
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Change Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Student Relationship; *Partnerships in Education; *Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	Barriers to Implementation; Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I; *Program Characteristics

ABSTRACT

Schools that are most successful in engaging parents and other family members in support of their children's learning look beyond traditional definitions of parent involvement--parent teacher organizations or signing report cards--to a broader conception of supporting families in activities outside of school that can encourage their children's' learning. This idea book is intended to assist educators, parents, and policy makers as they develop school-family partnerships, identifying and describing successful strategies used by 20 local Title I programs. Following an executive summary, the book notes resources for involving families in education, includes research supporting such partnerships, and describes how Title I encourages partnerships. Next, the book describes successful local approaches to family involvement in education, organized around strategies for overcoming common barriers to family involvement, including: (1) overcoming time and resource constraints; (2) providing information and training to parents and school staff; (3) restructuring schools to support family involvement; (4) bridging school-family differences; and (5) tapping external supports for partnerships. Finally, the book presents conclusions about establishing and sustaining partnerships, noting that at the same time that successful partnerships share accountability, specific stakeholders must assume individual responsibility, and that those schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses. Four appendices present profiles of 10 successful partnerships, descriptions in table format of 20 successful local approaches, contact information for profiled partnership programs, and resources for building successful partnerships. Contains 13 references. (HTH)

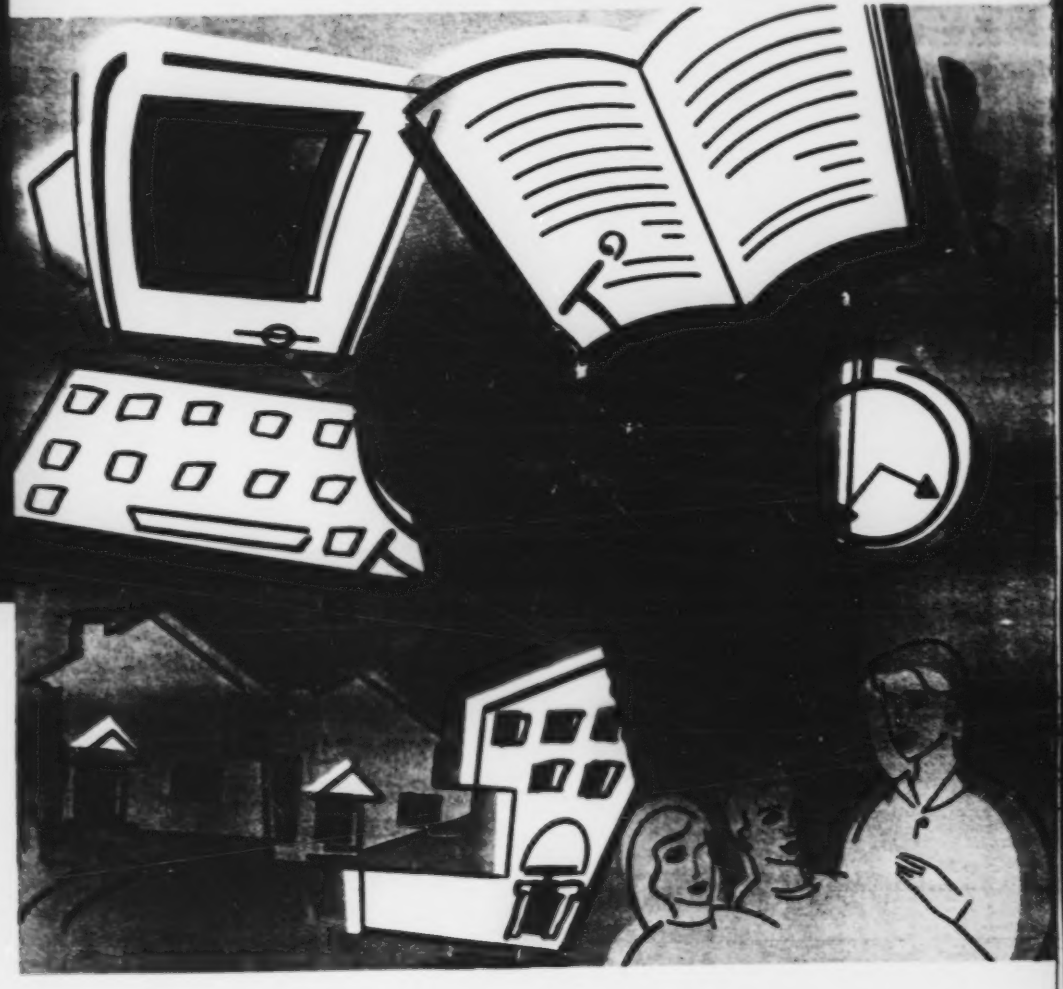
ED 412 031

U S
DEPARTMENT
OF
EDUCATION

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Family Involvement in Children's Education

Successful Local Approaches



AN IDEA BOOK

ED U25945

Office of Educational Research and Improvement

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Family Involvement in Children's Education

Successful Local Approaches

An Idea Book

Janie E. Funkhouser
Miriam R. Gonzales
Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

Project Officer
Oliver C. Moles
National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Ricky T. Takai
Acting Assistant Secretary

National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students
Edward J. Fuentes
Director

Media and Information Services
Cynthia Hearn Dorfman
Director

October 1997

This Idea Book is offered to stimulate thinking and discussion about how schools can help overcome barriers to family involvement in their children's education—regardless of family circumstances or student performance. While this book draws on the successful local approaches studied, we would like to hear about effective programs or practices that have worked in your community. Send your comments to the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20202–8173 or fax them to 202–401–3036. A description of the Partnership and its activities can be found on page D-17 of this publication.

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328
ISBN 0-16-049254-8

Foreword

We well know that when educators, families, and communities work together, schools get better. As a result, students get the high quality education they need to lead productive lives. Yet various barriers in the school, home, and community often prevent strong partnerships from developing.

This Idea Book describes how some schools and their communities have overcome key barriers—finding the time, increasing their information about each other, bridging school-family differences, improving schools, and tapping external supports to strengthen school-family partnerships.

The report concludes that successful partnerships require the sustained mutual collaboration and support of school staffs and families at home and at school. Businesses or community groups can also help schools and families to work together.

This Idea Book is one of an occasional series issued by the U.S. Department of Education to provide promising ideas to educators and community leaders on the critical issues we face together. It is designed for school administrators, teachers, policymakers, and parents to help families become more active participants in their children's education.

This Idea Book is based on case studies of 20 successful education programs around the country. They include elementary and secondary schools and districtwide programs that receive Title I funds from the U.S. Department of Education. What these schools have done with low-income students and their families can be done by all schools.

Also, an ongoing source of assistance and networking opportunities can be found in the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. If you are interested in joining the Partnership, call 1–800–USA–LEARN.

In addition, schools that are working to build family-school-community partnerships focused on critical education issues may find "A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for School-Family-Community Partnerships" to be helpful. It can be ordered free of charge by calling 1–800–USA–LEARN.

I encourage you to draw on the ideas in this book and the successes of the profiled schools to improve your schools, to strengthen school relationships with families, and to help all children learn more.

Richard W. Riley
Secretary of Education

Executive Summary

Thirty years of research confirms that family involvement is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Eagle, 1989; Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1994; Ziegler, 1987). When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. For these reasons, increasing family involvement in the education of their children is an important goal for schools, particularly those serving low-income and other students at risk of failure. Increasing family involvement in children's education is also an important goal of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)[1], which is designed to enable schools to provide opportunities for low-income and low-achieving children to acquire knowledge and skills contained in challenging standards developed for all children. Title I is the largest federal program supporting elementary and secondary education.

Families and Schools as Partners

If families are to work with schools as partners in the education of their children, schools must provide them with the opportunities and support they need to become involved. Too often schools expect families to do it all alone. Developing effective partnerships with families requires that all school staff (administrators, teachers, and support staff) create a school environment that welcomes parents and encourages them to raise questions and voice their concerns as well as to participate appropriately in decision making. Developing partnerships also requires that school staff provide parents with the information and training they need to become involved and that they reach out to parents with invitations to participate in their children's learning.

Schools that are most successful in engaging parents and other family members in support of their children's learning look beyond traditional definitions of parent involvement.

Schools that are most successful in engaging parents and other family members in support of their children's learning look beyond traditional definitions of parent involvement—participating in a parent teacher organization or signing quarterly report cards—to a broader conception of parents as full partners in the education of their children. Rather than striving only to increase

parent participation in school-based activities, successful schools seek to support families in their activities outside of school that can encourage their children's learning. Schools that have developed successful partnerships with parents view student achievement as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders—including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders—play important roles in supporting children's learning.

Successful school-family partnerships require the sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staffs and families at home and at school in activities that can directly affect the success of children's learning.

Successful school-family partnerships require the sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staffs and families at home and at school in activities that can directly affect the success of children's learning. If families are to work with schools as full partners in the education of their children, schools must provide them with the opportunities and support they need for success.

Successful Approaches to Family Involvement in Education

This Idea Book is intended to assist educators, parents, and policy makers as they develop and nurture school-family partnerships.[2] The Idea Book identifies and describes successful strategies used by 20 local Title I programs that have overcome barriers to parent involvement (see appendix B for a brief overview of each program). These district and school programs enhance parent-school communications and help parents support their children's academic work at school and at home. Some of the programs involve parents in school planning and governance activities and as volunteers. Some also provide coordinated essential non-educational services for families to support their children's academic development. Telephone interviews with staff and parents at these programs as well as focus group interviews with parents provided the detailed illustrations of specific strategies for overcoming barriers to parent involvement included here.

This Idea Book suggests ways that schools, families, and communities can work together to build strong partnerships. It is organized around strategies for overcoming common barriers to family involvement in schools. These strategies include:

- **Overcoming time and resource constraints.** In order to build strong partnerships, families and school staff members need time to get to know one another, plan how they will work together to increase student learning, and carry out their plans. Successful programs find the time and resources for both teachers and parents to develop school-family partnerships.

- **Providing information and training to parents and school staff.** Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misperceptions and distrust can flourish between parents and school personnel. Initiatives to bridge the information gap between parents and school are at the center of each of the 20 programs reviewed for this Idea Book. Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletters, handbooks, and home visits, parents and school staff across these programs are learning how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school.

- **Restructuring schools to support family involvement.** Developing a successful school-family partnership must be a whole school endeavor, not the work of a single person or program. Traditional school organization and practices, especially in secondary schools, often discourage family members from becoming involved. To create a welcoming environment for parents, one that enlists their support in helping their children succeed, schools can make changes that make them more personal and inviting places. Whatever steps schools take in developing partnerships with families, schools that are most successful are prepared to reconsider all of their established ways of doing business and to restructure in ways that will make them less hierarchical, more personal, and more accessible to parents.

This Idea Book is intended to assist educators, parents, and policy makers as they develop and nurture school-family partnerships.

- **Bridging school-family differences.** Language and cultural differences as well as differences in educational attainment separating families and school staff can make communication and family participation in school activities difficult. Strategies to address these differences include reaching out to parents with little formal education, addressing language differences through bilingual services for communicating both orally and in writing with families about school programs and children's progress, and promoting cultural understanding to build trust between home and school.

- **Tapping external supports for partnerships.** Many Title I schools have nourished and strengthened partnerships by tapping the supports available in their local communities and beyond. Collaborative efforts to provide schools and families with the tools they need to support learning can include partnerships with local businesses, health care and other community service agencies, and colleges and universities, as well as supports provided by school districts and states.

Effects on Students and Families

The experience of the school and district programs reviewed for this report supports the conclusion that family involvement can have significant effects on student achievement. Appendix B presents evidence of improvement in student outcomes, wherever it was available, for each of the school or district programs highlighted in this Idea Book. Although it is impossible to attribute student achievement gains or other student outcomes in any of these schools or districts solely to their parent involvement activities, it does appear that many schools that make parent involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve. These positive outcomes may be due to increased parent involvement itself, or, what is more likely, to a whole constellation of factors, including a strong instructional program and a commitment to high standards for all students. Nevertheless, it appears that strong parent involvement is an important feature of many schools that succeed in raising student achievement.

Effective strategies for partnerships differ from community to community, and the most appropriate strategies for a particular community will depend on local interests, needs, and resources.

Guidelines for Effective Partnerships

Effective strategies for partnerships differ from community to community, and the most appropriate strategies for a particular community will depend on local interests, needs, and resources. Even so, successful approaches to promoting family involvement in the education of their children share an emphasis on

innovation and flexibility. Furthermore, most of the schools included in this Idea Book have enhanced their ability to be innovative and flexible by implementing schoolwide programs.[3] The experiences of the programs included here suggest the following guidelines for successful partnerships:

- **There is no "one size fits all" approach to partnerships.** Build on what works well. Begin the school-family partnership by identifying, with families, the strengths, interests, and needs of families, students, and school staff, and design strategies that respond to identified strengths, interests, and needs.

- **Training and staff development is an essential investment.** Strengthen the school-family partnership with professional development and training for all school staff as well as parents and other family members. Both school staff and families need the knowledge and skills that enable them to work with one another and with the larger community to support children's learning.

- **Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships.** Plan strategies that accommodate the varied language and cultural needs as well as lifestyles and work schedules of school staff and families. Even the best planned school-family partnerships will fail if the participants cannot communicate effectively.

- **Flexibility and diversity are key.** Recognize that effective parent involvement takes many forms that may not necessarily require parents' presence at a workshop, meeting, or school. The emphasis should be on parents helping children learn, and this can happen in schools, homes, or elsewhere in a community.

- **Projects need to take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools.** These can include school districts, community organizations and public agencies, local colleges and universities, state education agencies, and ED-sponsored Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers.[4] While Title I program funds support the parent involvement activities of many programs featured here, several have increased the resources available for parent involvement activities by looking beyond school walls.

- **Change takes time.** Recognize that developing a successful school-family partnership requires continued effort over time, and that solving one problem often creates new challenges. Further, a successful partnership requires the involvement of many stakeholders, not just a few.

- **Projects need to regularly assess the effects of the partnership using multiple indicators.** These may include indicators of family, school staff, and community participation in and satisfaction with school-related activities. They may also include measures of the quality of school-family interactions and of student educational progress.

This Idea Book includes in-depth profiles of 10 local parent involvement programs and describes why and how each program developed its own particular strategies and activities.

Profiles of Successful Partnerships

This Idea Book includes (in appendix A) in-depth profiles of 10 local parent involvement programs and describes why and how each program developed its own particular strategies and activities. These 10 local programs were selected to highlight differing approaches to building successful school-family partnerships. They were also selected to represent a mix of effective strategies to promote family involvement in elementary and secondary schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the country. Six of the profiles describe parent involvement programs in elementary schools:

- Atenville Elementary School in Harts, West Virginia
- Cane Run Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky
- Rodney B. Cox Elementary School in Dade City, Florida
- Ferguson Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Hueco Elementary School in El Paso, Texas
- Wendell-Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School in Kansas City, Missouri

A seventh profile describes a school program—Roosevelt High School in Dallas, Texas—that is part of a statewide initiative to develop strong community-based constituencies of parents, teachers, and community leaders as a strategy to increase student achievement in low-income areas throughout the state.

Two profiles (the Buffalo Parent Center in Buffalo, New York, and the Parent Resource Center in Stockton, California) describe centers that provide services and activities for families districtwide, helping students and parents alike gain the skills and motivation they need to stay involved with their local schools.

The remaining profile describes the district-wide parent involvement program offered by Maine's School Administration District #3, which focuses on drawing parents into the schools, providing them and their children with interactive learning experiences, and involving parents as well as teachers in curricular and instructional planning.

This Idea Book also provides (in appendix D) information on resources, including organizations and publications, to assist educators, parents, and policy makers in their efforts to build and nurture strong school-family partnerships.

Notes

1. Title I of the ESEA was amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994.

2. This Idea Book was developed as part of a study, required under IASA and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), to identify and describe common barriers to effective family involvement in the education of children participating in the Title I program and successful local programs that improve parent involvement and the performance of these children (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

3. A schoolwide program school may use its Title I Part A funds combined with other federal education funds to upgrade the school's entire educational program rather than to deliver federally supported services only to identified children. By affecting the entire program of instruction, the overall education of children in high poverty schools can be improved. Beginning with the 1996-97 school year, Title I participating schools with a poverty level of at least 50 percent can choose to become a schoolwide program.

4. The role of the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers is to support and assist states, school districts, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of funds under the IASA by providing technical assistance in: (1) implementing school reform to improve teaching and learning for all students; (2) adopting, adapting, and implementing promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning; and (3) coordinating IASA recipients' school reform programs with other educational plans and activities so that all students, particularly students at risk of educational failure, are provided opportunities to meet challenging state content and performance standards.

Acknowledgments

We extend our thanks to the members of the study panel who helped shape the project, recommended schools and districts that served as sources for good ideas, and commented on both volumes of the Idea Book draft: Marilyn Aklin and Richard Nero of the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents, Diane D'Angelo of RMC Research Corporation, Joyce Epstein of the Johns Hopkins University, Warlene Gary of the National Education Association, Linda Rodriguez of the Pasco County (Florida) School Board, and Betty Warren-Smith of the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents and the Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School in Kansas City, Missouri.

Within the U.S. Department of Education, Oliver Moles in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement designed and oversaw the project. Mary Jean LeTendre, director of the Compensatory Education Program, provided invaluable knowledge and technical insight into the contents of this publication. Ms. LeTendre was assisted by Linda Varner Mount and Lorraine Wise, also of her staff. Barbara Coates and her colleagues at the Planning and Evaluation Service provided advice and assistance throughout the project.

The teachers, parents, principals, and other staff of the schools highlighted in this report gave generously of their time to help the authors compile detailed and accurate accounts of their programs. They are gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also are due to the parents who participated in focus group interviews. Their contributions to the study represent a perspective that is too easily lost—the voices of families.

Contents

Foreword iii

Executive Summary v

Resources For Involving Families In Education 1

Building Successful Partnerships 1

Research Supports Partnerships 2

Title I Encourages Partnerships 4

Overcoming Common Barriers to Family Involvement 5

Successful Local Approaches To Family Involvement In Education 7

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints 7

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff 12

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement 22

Bridging School-Family Differences 27

Tapping External Supports for Partnerships 33

Effects on Students and Families 36

Conclusions About Establishing And Sustaining Partnerships 39

References 43

Appendix A: Profiles of Successful Partnerships A-1

Atenville Elementary School: Parents as Educational Partners in a Rural Setting A-3

Buffalo Parent Center: A Large Urban School District Gives Parents a Place of Their Own A-9

Cane Run Elementary School: A Parent-Friendly, Family Focused Urban School A-14

Rodney B. Cox Elementary School: A Small Town, Full Service School A-20

Ferguson Elementary School: Restructuring an Inner-City School to Support Family Involvement A-25

Hueco Elementary School: Promoting Cultural Understanding and Communication in a Rural School A-31

Maine School Administration District #3: A Geographically Dispersed, Rural District Draws Parents into Schools . . A-38

Stockton Unified School District Parent Resource Center: A Racially Diverse, Urban District Stresses Information and Training for Parents A-44

Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet: An Open-Door Policy for Inner-City Parents A-49

Roosevelt High School (The Alliance Schools Initiative): An Inner-City High School Joins a Statewide Effort A-55

Appendix B: Descriptions of 20 Successful Local Approaches B-1

Appendix C: Contact Information for Profiled Partnership Programs C-1

Appendix D: Resources for Building Successful Partnerships D-1

Resources for Involving Families in Education

Thirty years of research confirms that family involvement is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Eagle, 1989; Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1994; Ziegler, 1987). When families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. For these reasons, increasing family involvement in the education of their children is an important goal for schools, particularly those serving low-income and other students at risk of failure.

Achieving effective school-family partnerships is not always easy, however. Barriers to family involvement in schools arise from many sources, some related to the constraints facing teachers and other school staff, some related to the challenges and pressures that families face, and others related to language, cultural, and socioeconomic differences between families and school staff. For many schools across the nation, these barriers are formidable obstacles to increasing parents' involvement in their children's education. Experience in other schools and communities, however, demonstrates that schools and families can work together to overcome these barriers in productive and mutually satisfying ways.

Increasing family involvement in the education of their children is an important goal for schools.

Building Successful Partnerships

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was created to bridge the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged children and other children. It is designed to enable schools to provide opportunities for disadvantaged children to acquire knowledge and skills contained in challenging standards developed for all children. Title I is the largest federal program supporting elementary and secondary education. Increasing family involvement in children's education is an important goal of Title I. This Idea Book is intended to help Title I and other

Successful partnerships are those that involve the sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staffs and families at home and at school in activities and efforts that can directly and positively affect the success of children's learning and progress in school.

schools build effective partnerships with families to support student learning. It suggests a range of strategies and activities for educators, parents, and policy makers to consider.

The 20 schools and districts included in this Idea Book span all grade levels (K–2) as well as urban, suburban, and rural areas across the country. They were selected based on a review of research on promising parent involvement practices and the recommendations of several experts. The experts include researchers, education practitioners, and parent representatives. Findings from focus group interviews with parents of children attending five of the schools are also included in this Idea Book. These interviews elicited parents' perspectives on the most effective ways to engage families in their children's education, barriers to parent involvement in Title I schools, and the steps schools can take to overcome barriers and reach out to parents. The Idea Book also includes in-depth profiles of 10 local programs, selected to highlight a variety of approaches to building strong partnerships.

Successful partnerships are those that involve the sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staffs and families at home and at school in activities and efforts that can directly and positively affect the success of children's learning and progress in school. Schools that have developed successful partnerships with parents view student achievement as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholdersincluding parents, administrators, teachers, and community leadersplay important roles in supporting children's learning.

Research Supports Partnerships

A sizeable body of research addresses programs or reforms that stress parent involvement as a means to improve student academic achievement and restructure public schools (see, for example, Epstein, 1995; Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Rioux & Berla, 1993; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Fruchter, Galletta, and White (1992) analyze 18 recently developed programs or reforms that stress parental involvement as a strategy to improve student academic performance, restructure schools, and reform public education, especially in schools serving low-income and disadvantaged students. Rioux and Berla (1993) highlight innovative parental involvement programs for diverse populations of students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through high school and suggest strategies for

creating successful programs. In *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*, the U.S. Department of Education (1994) describes how schools, community-based organizations, businesses, states, and federal programs can help parents take more active roles in their children's learning. For families of children with disabilities, Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) provide a review of research and practice on partnerships between families and professionals, including school personnel. Of particular relevance to families' involvement in their children's education is the discussion of barriers to family participation in developing an individualized education plan (IEP).[2] Additionally, Epstein (1995) has summarized the theory, framework, and guidelines that can assist schools in building partnerships. To add to the body of evidence on strategies to build and strengthen school-family partnerships, we selected schools to include in this Idea Book that had not, for the most part, been featured in other national publications.

After scanning the research and receiving experts' recommendations about Title I schools and districts with successful parent involvement programs, we telephoned potential sites to collect information about parent involvement activities and strategies, demographic information, and evidence of success, including data on the level of parent involvement in particular activities as well as any improvements in student achievement. This information for the 20 programs appears in appendix B. Most of these sites demonstrate a wide variety of parent involvement strategies and present strong evidence of success in increasing the numbers of parents participating in activities. A few also provide some evidence of improvements in student performance. However, in selecting the 20 programs, priority was given to those that had high or improved parent participation levels, since in most cases it is not possible to attribute improved student achievement directly to particular parent involvement strategies or activities. (Gains in student academic achievement depend on many factors that include parent involvement as well as curriculum, instruction, and effective teaching.)

In selecting the 20 programs, priority was given to those that had high or improved parent participation levels.

Title I requires that parents receive information and training in a variety of areas related to their children's education, including the state's standards for what all children are expected to know and be able to do.

Title I Encourages Partnerships

Title I, as reauthorized by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, places a greater emphasis on parent involvement than did its predecessor, chapter 1. Chapter 1 defined parent involvement as the building of "partnerships between home and school," but left the development of strategies for building these partnerships up to local schools and districts. Under IASA, Title I requires that local schools and districts adopt specific strategies for developing school-family partnerships. Title I parent involvement provisions emphasize: policy involvement by parents at the school and district level; shared school-family responsibility for high academic performance, as expressed in school-parent compacts; and the development of school and parent capacity for productive mutual collaboration. These Title I requirements might serve as useful guidelines for all schools as they strengthen school-family partnerships.

Title I requires that parents receive information and training in a variety of areas related to their children's education, including the state's standards for what all children are expected to know and be able to do. Parents must also be informed about the state's assessment procedures for measuring performance and progress. In addition, parents must be involved in Title I planning and decision-making, including the development of the school plan. The law requires that they receive assistance and support, including literacy assistance if necessary, to assume these roles and to work with their children at home.

Title I requires schools to develop a written parent involvement policy and to develop, with parents, school-parent compacts that describe the responsibilities of both the school and parents as they work together to help students achieve high standards. These compacts—and progress in meeting the responsibilities they describe—are to be discussed during parent-teacher conferences. Title I encourages compacts that recognize the full range of roles that parents can play in their children's education as well as the need for parents and schools to develop and maintain partnerships and ongoing dialogue around children's achievement.

Finally, Title I requires local education agencies (LEAs) to reserve funds from their Part A (basic programs operated by LEAs) allocations to fund parent involvement, including such activities as family literacy and parenting skills education. Nearly all of the

schools featured in this Idea Book have implemented schoolwide programs,[3] and their Title I and other federal and local funds support a wide variety of parent involvement activities. In addition, as indicated in appendix B, both schools and districts often draw from other funding sources at the federal, state, and local levels to contribute to their education programs and activities including parent involvement.

Overcoming Common Barriers to Family Involvement

Recent data from two U.S. Department of Education (ED)-sponsored nationally representative surveys (a survey of principals on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K–8, and the Parent/Family Involvement Component of the 1996 National Household Educational Survey) suggest that many of the barriers addressed in this Idea Book have significant, measurable effects on parent involvement in schools. Further, data from both surveys show that lower-income parents and parents with less education participate less often in school-based parent involvement activities than do higher-income parents with higher education levels. In addition, parents of older children participate less often than parents of younger children.

When school-related, family-related, or community-related barriers deter parents from becoming involved, the consequences for students can be serious. This Idea Book is organized around strategies for overcoming a common set of barriers to family involvement in schools. These strategies, drawn from the literature and advice of experts, include:

- overcoming time and resource constraints;
- providing information and training to parents and school staff;
- restructuring schools to support family involvement;
- bridging school-family differences; and
- tapping external supports for partnerships.

Key aspects of each strategy and related activities used by the 20 schools and districts studied are discussed in the following sections.

This Idea Book is organized around strategies for overcoming a common set of barriers to family involvement in schools.

Successful Local Approaches to Family Involvement in Education

Many successful strategies for family involvement used by Title I schools and districts demonstrate the capacity of families, schools, and communities, working together, to improve children's learning. Because families, schools, and communities vary, however, a strategy that works in one setting may not work in another. Thus, there is no one best model that can be easily transplanted from place to place. Stakeholders must understand the conditions of their communities in order to select and tailor approaches that meet local needs. Stakeholders must also recognize that parent involvement takes many forms; it may not necessarily require, for example, parents' presence at a workshop, meeting, or school. The emphasis should be on families helping children succeed in school, and this can happen in schools, homes, and elsewhere in local communities. Creating an effective partnership in which parents feel welcome and valued requires that schools work to break down many of the common barriers to effective partnerships, including barriers related to time, school structure, and training. The following sections present strategies that schools and districts have employed to overcome each of these barriers to parent involvement and to help build productive relationships with parents.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

In order to build strong partnerships, families and school staff members need time to get to know one another, learn from one another, and plan how they will work together to increase student learning; this need can be especially pressing in Title I schools. For example, principals of K–8 Title I schools report that time is a barrier to parent involvement more often than any other factor. Eighty-seven percent of Title I principals report that lack of time on the part of parents is a significant barrier to parent involvement, and 56 percent report that lack of time on the part of school staff is a barrier (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Almost all Title I schools and districts that have been successful in developing strong school-family partnerships have found ways to make time for parents and teachers to work together and to use other resources to support their partnerships.

In order to build strong partnerships, families and school staff members need time to get to know one another, learn from one another, and plan how they will work together to increase student learning.

In addition to helping teachers make the most efficient use of their limited time, some schools have also found ways to buy more time for teachers or to allow teachers to use their time more flexibly.

Finding Time for Teachers

Strategies for helping teachers make time to develop school-family partnerships include (1) assigning parent coordinators or home-school liaisons to help teachers maintain contact with parents through home visits or by covering classes for teachers so they can meet with parents, (2) providing time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents or visit them at their homes, (3) providing stipends or compensatory time off for teachers to meet with parents after school hours, and (4) freeing up teachers from routine duties, such as lunchroom supervision, in order to meet with students' family members. Home-school liaisons can also handle many of the logistical tasks associated with fostering school-family partnerships, such as contacting all families by telephone at the beginning of the school year and encouraging parent activities at home and at school. In this way liaisons free teachers to concentrate on building relationships. In fact, focus group interviews suggest that having a parent fill the role of liaison can help parents form a strong network of support to stay involved in school activities and decisions.

In addition to helping teachers make the most efficient use of their limited time, some schools have also found ways to buy more time for teachers or to allow teachers to use their time more flexibly. Some schools use Title I resources strategically to help buy time for teachers; other schools have adopted "flexible scheduling" as a feature of teacher contracts that allow teachers more time to interact with parents outside of the traditional school day. The schools reviewed for this study have used the following strategies for freeing up teachers to work with parents:

- Atenville Elementary, a schoolwide program in the Lincoln County Public Schools, Harts, West Virginia, gives teachers release time to conduct home visits with classes covered by the principal or another teacher. The school uses Title I funds to support a part-time parent coordinator to organize the "telephone tree" program, which helps maintain home-school communications. The coordinator also organizes parent volunteers to help make home visits. Parent volunteers staff lunch and recreational periods to give teachers a daily in-school planning period that can be used to meet with parents. From 1991–92 to 1995-96, the number of parent volunteer hours rose from 2,000 to 7,000.

- Ferguson Elementary, a schoolwide program in the School District of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), uses Title I funds to provide compensation for teachers who conduct parent workshops in the evening and on weekends. Title I funds also support the parent involvement coordinator and school-community coordinator. These coordinators operate the Parent Network that helps teachers communicate information to students and parents about upcoming events. The 1995–96 fall open house drew 350 parents, compared with 30 parents in the fall of 1989. In addition, about 50 parents volunteer as classroom aides each week.

- The Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School in the Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City, Missouri, uses its schoolwide program to employ a full-time parent-community liaison. The liaison keeps teachers informed about family needs and helps teachers spread information on school-related issues to all parents. For example, last year the parent-community liaison led an orientation for parents on state and district school policies; more than 150 parents attended. The liaison helps organize all school-family events, allowing teachers and principals to spend more time meeting with parents to discuss student learning and less time making logistical and administrative arrangements to organize events.

In addition to using resources to free up time for teachers, schools can also deploy their resources strategically to help teachers and other staff overcome the logistical constraints that often hinder their work with families.

Other Resources to Support Schools' Outreach to Families

In addition to using resources to free up time for teachers, schools can also deploy their resources strategically to help teachers and other staff overcome the logistical constraints that often hinder their work with families. Some schools are using technology to support school-home communication; in addition to providing easier access to telephones for teachers, some schools are using voice mail, "information hotlines," and other technology to make communication more efficient. For example:

- In Maine's School Administration District (SAD) #3, in Thorndike, Maine, several communication strategies address barriers posed by the long distances between schools and homes in this rural area. Several grants from the local telephone company, Nynex, and the state's Public Utilities Commission have supported the wiring of schools for computers and telephone hub sites to allow parents to communicate with schools via computer. Parents can use terminals at

nearby schools or local town halls to communicate with the schools their children attend, which are often many miles away.

- Each Atenville Elementary school teacher has a telephone in his or her classroom to enable home-school communication throughout the school day.

- At Ferguson Elementary School, Title I funds pay for the telephone line used by the Parent Network and for other resources and materials for parent and staff workshops on parent involvement.

Helping Parents Overcome Time and Resource Constraints

Schools can be sensitive to time pressures facing parents by scheduling meetings at night (in neighborhoods where parents feel safe traveling to the school at night) or before shifts to accommodate the schedules of working parents or on weekend mornings to address parents' safety concerns. Schools can also help parents by: (1) providing early notices of meetings and activities, allowing parents time to adjust their schedules; (2) establishing homework hotlines or voice mail systems so parents can stay in touch with their children's schoolwork without leaving their homes (Moles, 1996); (3) offering the same event more than once; and (4) providing information to parents who could not attend a meeting to keep them informed.

One parent noted, "They could offer incentives; transportation and help with babysitting or child care would be helpful."

Schools can also address parents' resource constraints by: (1) providing parents with transportation and child care services so that they can attend school events; (2) holding school- initiated events near families' homes (e.g., at community or public housing centers); and (3) conducting home visits. In focus group interviews, parents noted that these supports send a strong message that the school is serious about getting them involved. One parent noted, "They could offer incentives; transportation and help with babysitting or child care would be helpful."

The following schools have developed strategies to help parents overcome the time and commuting barriers (e.g., distance from school, lack of transportation) that deter many parents from interacting directly with schools:

- At Buhrer Elementary, a schoolwide program in the Cleveland Public Schools, Cleveland, Ohio, teachers hold parent conferences off-campus in places that are closer to parents'

and students' homes. The school also holds Block Parent Meetings for those families who cannot attend school events because they live on the outskirts of the community and lack transportation. Block meetings address parent concerns and offer an opportunity to share school-related information. These meetings take place every two or three months in a parent's home or a nearby library. A typical meeting attracts 18-20 parents, and the principal reports a continuing increase in the number of block parents attending school functions since the program began.

- Several schools also offer transportation and child care services and hold events in the evenings and on weekends to enable parents to attend parent workshops or other school-related events. For example, at Rodney B. Cox Elementary, a schoolwide program in the Pasco County Public Schools, Dade City, Florida, the parent involvement coordinator organizes carpools for parents to attend events. At Cox, up to 200 parents participate in workshops each month. The district-wide Parent Resource Center in Stockton, California, hired a school bus driver to take parents to the center and provides babysitters to care for young children. To accommodate parents' needs, Ferguson Elementary offers workshops and classes on the weekends and evening and also provides child care services; Saturday workshops have attracted 100–150 parents each. And in Maine's SAD #3, both teachers and parents are encouraged to bring their families to potluck nights, a strategy to increase school-family communication that has led to higher attendance rates at these events. Three potluck nights held during the 1995–96 school year attracted increasing numbers of participants—roughly 50, 70, and 100 families.

- School staff at Cane Run Elementary, a schoolwide program in the Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky, report that many parents find it difficult to come into the school building to volunteer, so Cane Run's Family Resource Center staff coordinates volunteer activities that parents can carry out from home, such as preparing mailings, making telephone calls, and writing newsletters.

Resolving Safety Concerns

To address the fact that many parents, especially those with children attending high-poverty schools, are concerned about traveling to and from their child's school at night, schools and communities can be responsible for assuring that school

11

Schools and communities can be responsible for assuring that school neighborhoods are safe.

Parents themselves play an important role in ensuring that the school is perceived as a safe place for other parents to gather.

neighborhoods are safe. For example, communities can set up neighborhood watches to combat crime, and schools can hold events in churches or community centers located near parents' homes. Parent resource centers can also offer activities in locations near parents' homes. The Stockton Unified School District Parent Resource Center in Stockton, California, for example, often offers workshops at local school sites because many parents are hesitant to leave their own neighborhoods.

Parents themselves play an important role in ensuring that the school is perceived as a safe place for other parents to gather. As the parent involvement specialist at Stockton's Parent Resource Center noted, parents at the center have not only encouraged other parents to become involved but also had a dramatic impact on at least one school. Two years ago Webster Middle School in Stockton experienced gang-related problems. After a fight occurred between two gang members in the school one afternoon, rumors began to circulate of a big confrontation that would take place the next day. Concerned about gang warfare erupting at the school, the school principal called for help. A mentor parent at the school called other parents and organized them for action. The next day 40 parents showed up at the school to help patrol the halls and school grounds. The principal asserts that this show of parental support, along with the parents' ongoing volunteer efforts, has led to the virtual elimination of gang-related activity at the school.

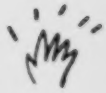
In addition, when asked if safety issues deter parents from coming to the school, parents at one urban high school responded that the best example they can set for other parents is not to stay away. "There is no safe place anymore; we make it safe with our presence," said one parent. "We keep an eye out on the children, and we have security patrols that drive around," noted a parent at another inner-city school. "But safety is another reason why parents should be involved."

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misperceptions and distrust can flourish between parents and school personnel. In fact, most parents and school staff in Title I schools receive little training on how to work with one another. For example, almost half of principals (48 percent) in K–8 Title I schools report that lack of staff training in working with

parents is a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Initiatives to bridge the information gap between parents and schools are at the center of each of the 20 schools reviewed for this Idea Book. Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletters, handbooks, and home visits, parents and school staff across these programs are learning how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school. Their approaches include helping parents support learning at home, preparing parents to participate in school decision-making, and providing teachers, principals, and school staff with strategies for reaching out to parents and working with them as partners. These approaches share an emphasis on training and information that is grounded in the needs and goals of families and school staff, and that focus on changing the negative attitudes that parents and school staff may hold towards each other.

Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletters, handbooks, and home visits, parents and school staff across these programs are learning how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school.



Training to Inform and Involve Parents

All of the schools and districts interviewed by telephone for this study offer parents training and information through workshops held weekly, monthly, or several times throughout the year. Parent training activities across the 20 programs focus on one or more of four areas of parent involvement: parenting, learning at home, decision-making in schools, and volunteering.

Parenting workshops. Workshops on parenting help families learn about child development and how to support student academic learning. Parenting workshops cover a number of different issues, such as children's language development and learning styles, parent nurturing and discipline strategies, child abuse prevention, and nutrition and health practices. For example, Stockton's Parent Resource Center offers four to six parenting workshops each month on topics such as the relationship between child achievement and parent expectations, "protective parenting" skills to prevent children from engaging in unhealthy behaviors, and anger management. The center also trains "mentor parents" at intensive three-day institutes. As mentors, they help other parents learn about strategies for helping children learn and outreach strategies that build partnerships between schools and families.

Schools can also help build parenting skills by assisting parents in reaching their own academic and vocational goals. In collaboration with local community colleges, many programs connect

parents to adult education courses to receive a General Educational Development (GED) credential, college credit, or develop job-related skills.

- The district-sponsored Parent Center in the Buffalo Public Schools, Buffalo, New York, offers parent-child computer classes for students in grades 6 through 12. Classes bring parents and their children together to develop skills in desktop publishing and computer programming. For parents who cannot attend the center, the Take Home Computer Program orients parents on how to install and operate computers that they can keep for five to six weeks. On a survey about the 1994–95 Take Home Computer Program, 44 percent of parents reported that the program had a significant effect on their child's motivation toward learning; 52 percent reported that it had some effect. All parents reported noticeable or significant improvements in their children's math and reading skills.

  In addition, parents participating in the center's Even Start program have many choices to meet their educational needs, including: classes in adult basic education to earn their GED, computer literacy training that can lead to advanced courses and college credit, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and classes in parenting skills.

- Ferguson Elementary School in Philadelphia offers an adult evening school in conjunction with a nearby university. During 1995–96, 25 parents received certificates of continuing education from the university. Last year, classes were offered in computer literacy, self-esteem, ESL, and Spanish literacy. Courses are offered at the school site and taught by teachers, parents, and community members. To support parent involvement, the university provides stipends for babysitters who care for the children of participants.

When parents hold high expectations for their children and encourage them to work hard, they support student success in school.

Helping parents support learning at home. Every family functions as a learning environment, regardless of its income level, structure, or ethnic and cultural background. In this respect, every family has the potential to support and improve the academic achievement of its children. When parents hold high expectations for their children and encourage them to work hard, they support student success in school.

Many parent programs offer workshops, hands-on training opportunities, or conduct home visits that help parents support their children's learning at home. These sessions offer ideas to families about how to help students with curriculum-related activities, homework, and other academic decisions and planning.

- During the 1995–96 school year, all first-grade teachers at Ferguson Elementary received training from Temple University to improve parent involvement. First-grade teachers, Temple trainers, and parents first met to discuss how the school should and could involve parents. Then all first-grade teachers met with Temple trainers to discuss priorities, chief among them being how to get parents to support learning at home and reinforce what students learn at school. Two of the first-grade teachers, along with Temple staff, then offered parents a series of five two-hour workshops on how to help children with reading and math at home. Parents learned, for example, how to use a list of common words to help children make sentences, learn grammar, and sharpen their reading skills; they also learned how to use a "number line" manipulative to help children practice adding and subtracting. Each year, parents who have completed this training help train the parents of new first-grade students.

Each year, parents who have completed this training help train the parents of new first-grade students.

- Schools in the Stockton, California, Unified School District offer parents workshops on hands-on teaching techniques to use with their children in math and language arts. At these workshops, parents can "make and take" educational materials, such as flash cards and board games, to use with their children at home.

- Buhrer Elementary School in Cleveland conducts family math and science workshops, where children and their families spend an evening at the school working on math and science activities together. In 1996, 35 parents attended the family math workshop. Buhrer also provides families with curriculum packets that parents can use at home; for example, last year's packets for primary school children included short stories and counting exercises using household materials.

- Parents at Wendell Phillips Magnet School in Kansas City asked for and received weekly student progress reports to help them keep track of the areas in which their children needed more work. A curriculum report will be issued to parents beginning in the second semester of the 1996–97 school year. As one focus group parent commented, "If I know what my child is studying I can help him at home, and I can see what progress he is making."

- More than 60 families with children under the age of eight are enrolled in the Buffalo Parent Center's Even Start program, which is offered in collaboration with the local adult learning center. Parents in the adult education program agree to accompany their children to the Parent Center for a minimum of 12 hours a week. Time at the Parent Center is set aside for "parent and child time" in the early childhood center, where families can use developmentally appropriate computer programs. The parent center also employs home liaisons who conduct home visits with the Even Start families once a week.

Several other parent programs inform parents how to develop study skills to prepare for required tests; parents also learn how to interpret test results to identify the areas in which their children may need further assistance. In focus groups some parents voiced their frustration at receiving the results of student testing and the school's ranking but no information about what the numbers mean. In addition, parent workshops offer parents important information to help them plan for their children's educational future. For example, Roosevelt High School, a schoolwide program in the Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, Texas, invites parents to an evening class to review the state assessment instrument and the skills their children are expected to demonstrate on the test. Next year, the staff will provide parent training on helping students develop study skills to prepare for the required tests. Parents will also receive training and information on how to prepare their children to attend college (e.g., completing financial aid forms, obtaining references, preparing for required standardized tests).

Many programs encourage parents to join school committees that make decisions on curriculum policies, parent involvement activities, the school budget, and reform initiatives.

Preparing parents to participate in school decision-making. Many programs encourage parents to join school committees that make decisions on curriculum policies, parent involvement activities, the school budget, and reform initiatives. In schoolwide program schools, administrators and teachers can play crucial roles in keeping parents informed about the program and

the guidelines they need to follow. One focus group parent said, "[The principal and Title I home-school liaison] make sure we keep up with what is going on with the Title I plan and procedures....we discuss this in our school advisory council meetings...we know who we receive the funding from and how we spend it. The parents helped write the Title I [schoolwide] plan." In addition, several parents participating in focus groups said that they had been involved in writing the Title I required school-parent compact, and commented that their participation provided some clear guidance on what parents need to do to help their children succeed academically and also gave them the sense that they were doing their part. Many schools offer training to help parents become effective decision-makers.

- The Parent Resource Center in Stockton prepares parents for decision-making roles through special training on topics such as creating, implementing, and evaluating a Title I school plan, understanding school budgets, and conducting successful meetings. Several parent participants have become members, board members, and officers of two organizations that advocate parental involvement: The California Association of Compensatory Education and the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents.

- Parents who serve on the Atenville Elementary School Action Research Team receive training on action research two or three times a year from the Institute for Responsive Education in Boston, Massachusetts. Last year, training sessions focused on education reform strategies such as working collaboratively, developing action plans, and goal-setting. In 1996, several Atenville parents put these skills to work as they successfully lobbied the Board of Education to keep the school's K–6 configuration.

Volunteer preparation. Rather than simply asking and expecting parents to volunteer in schools, several programs offer parents training on how to volunteer useful assistance to school staff and students.

- Parents at Atenville Elementary School volunteer as teacher aides in the classroom, provide teachers and administrators with logistical support, and help supervise children in the library and during lunch and recess periods. To prepare parents for these duties, the school provides two volunteer training sessions each fall to inform parents about school policies on

Rather than simply asking and expecting parents to volunteer in schools, several programs offer parents training on how to volunteer useful assistance to school staff and students.

discipline and confidentiality and to offer guidance on assisting teachers in the classroom as aides and tutors. Parents also learn about basic school office procedures, such as operating the copier machine and answering telephones. In 1995–96, 100 parents representing almost half of the families at the school participated in volunteer training.

- For the past two years, the Maine SAD #3 district volunteer coordinator has directed parent volunteer activities. As part of her job, she recruits volunteer coordinators for each school, and these individualstypically parentssurvey parents and teachers, distribute volunteer handbooks, and coordinate the yearly volunteer activities and schedules. To support individual school volunteer efforts, the district hosts an evening program for parents at the beginning of each year to inform them of volunteer activities available at each school. In addition, the district coordinator presents an orientation workshop at each schoolalso at the beginning of each yearto teach parents how to become more involved in their children's school and education. This year, the district volunteer coordinator plans to bring all of the coordinators together to compile a districtwide volunteer manual. During the 1995–1996 school year, volunteers contributed 3,500 hours to the district's public schools. The coordinator also organizes an annual teacher workshop entitled Building Effective Relationships with Volunteers to provide participants with ideas and skills for viewing parents as a resource.

Family resource centers offer many types of supports to families.

Information and Training Provided Through Family Resource Centers

Family resource centers offer many types of supports to families, including parenting classes, the organization of volunteer activities for schools, and the provision of information and ideas to families about how to help children with homework and other curriculum-related activities. Some also provide families with services such as the transportation and child care needed for families to participate in center activities, as well as referrals for health, employment, or housing needs. All operate under the guiding philosophy that schools and families need broad-based support to educate children.

- The Family Resource Center at Charter Oak School in the West Hartford School District, West Hartford, Connecticut, was one of the first state-established family resource centers directly linked to a local public school system. The center works closely with school staff and the parent-teacher organization to sponsor family activities and facilitate home-school communication. About 30–35 parents of school-age children visit the center each week. It offers a comfortable place where parents can read the latest books on parenting or meet teachers for lunch, and families can obtain child care referrals and scholarship information, receive counseling for problems, use the homework center, and participate in adult education classes. School-age children can register for mini-courses or borrow a toy for the weekend.

- The Greensville County Public Schools' Mobile Parent Resource Center in Emporia, Virginia, offers a model for making parent resource centers more accessible to rural parents. The mobile parent resource center is a 34-foot customized bus that serves parents of students receiving Title I services and travels to four sites a day remaining at least two hours at each site. It houses two classrooms equipped with adjustable tables, chairs, bulletin boards, chalkboards, televisions, a video-cassette recorder, cassette players, and laptop computers. Instructional materials include parenting videos and kits, books, newspapers, magazines, computer software, models, and samples of instructional materials that parents can check out to use with their children. Both reading and non-reading parents are trained there as tutors to work with their children. Parents receive help in selecting appropriate books to read with their children, and see videos of families reading and learning together. The parent resource center serves 12–18 parents at a time. Six area businesses allow the parent resource center to visit their work sites so that employees who are parents can visit before or after work or during breaks.

Schools that are successful in building school-family partnerships develop and use outreach mechanisms to channel information to parents on an ongoing basis.

Outreach Strategies to Keep Parents Informed

Schools that are successful in building school-family partnerships develop and use outreach mechanisms to channel information to parents on an ongoing basis. These mechanisms include distributing weekly or monthly parent newsletters, posting fliers in places where parents congregate, developing parent handbooks, making telephone calls, and conducting home visits. One focus

Several of the programs profiled for this report have developed special strategies for ensuring that each family receives personal, customized communication.

group participant underscored the importance of school-home contacts that share positive information about children as well as problems the child may be having.

Several of the programs profiled for this report have developed special strategies for ensuring that each family receives personal, customized communication from their child's school throughout the school year:

- Schoolwide programs at Turnbull Learning Academy in the San Mateo-Foster City School District, San Mateo, California, and South Delta Elementary School in the South Delta School District, Rolling Fork, Mississippi, implemented weekly take-home folders that include a parent participation sheet, information on upcoming events, and recent curriculum activities and graded tests. Parents sign and return folders each week. Teachers and parents report that the folders provide important academic information for parents, teachers, and students, and help increase parent-school communication.

- At Atenville Elementary, parent volunteers call all parents monthly to inform them about school events and to solicit feedback on past and future parent involvement activities. Several programs also reach out through home-school liaisons and parent coordinators, whose prime responsibility is to keep parents informed and maintain an open line of communication among families, schools, and community agencies.

- Parent volunteer coordinators in South Bay Union Elementary School District in Imperial Beach, California, also make home visits and inform families about social services offered throughout the community.

Maine's SAD #3 uses parent outreach to help bring community members and school staff together in support of shared educational goals. The district sponsors Community Day, an annual community-wide outreach and training effort. It brings families and community members together with teachers and school staff to participate in team-building activities, set educational goals, and devise strategies for accomplishing these goals. As a result of one recent Community Day, the town of Liberty initiated a plan to open a community library. Open to the general public, the Community Day activities are advertised through direct mailings, spots on a local cable station, newspaper advertisements, and local grassroots networking.

Information and Training for School Staff

Some schools offer teachers, principals, and school staff information and strategies on how to reach out to parents and work with them as partners. This can be especially beneficial to school staff who typically received little or no preservice training in these skills. In addition, changes in family structures and community life can require new or different family outreach strategies from what may have been effective in the past. Professional development activities may include sessions on making telephone calls, home visits, and other contact strategies, students' home culture and appreciating diversity, communication skills for parent-teacher conferences, and involving parents as leaders and decision-makers in the schools.

Some schools offer teachers, principals, and school staff information and strategies on how to reach out to parents and work with them as partners.

Special training for teachers and other school staff can play a key role in dispelling some of the misconceptions and stereotypes that become barriers to effective partnerships between parents and teachers. Parents in some schools, for example, take teachers on Community Walks that introduce teachers to the local neighborhood and help them understand the lives of their students outside of school. One parent in an inner-city high school described the purpose of these walks at her school:

> We had to educate them [the teachers] about the community [and] what children here may be going through... [On] Community Walks some teachers were actually amazed that some of the parents live in nice homes that are well taken care of. On these walks it became apparent that the teachers had a lot of stereotypes about the kids they were teaching and their families...

Other schools have found that engaging parent coordinators or parent volunteers to train school staff not only builds parents' leadership skills but also offers teachers the opportunity to learn about families from parents' perspectives.

Additional training activities include the following:

- Staff at Hueco Elementary, a schoolwide program in the Socorro Independent School District, El Paso, Texas, receive training for home visits and family outreach from a successful parent coordinator employed in a neighboring district. Staff on the family support team also receive training for supporting and working with parents of students with academic or behavioral problems.

Developing a successful school-family partnership must be a whole school endeavor, not the work of a single person or program.

- Last year in Stockton, California, mentor parents who are trained at the district's Parent Resource Center spent 5,000 hours in the schools providing professional development to school staff on parent involvement and home-school communication. Among other activities, mentor parents conducted four workshops on obstacles to parent involvement in schools, including parents' negative prior experiences with school that may discourage them from participating, and teacher bias that may result from a parent's different socio-economic status, race, gender, physical appearance, or language ability.

- The Alamo Navajo Community School, a schoolwide program operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Magaleno, New Mexico, hosts a cultural orientation program to inform new teachers (almost all of whom are non-Navajo) about the Navajo culture and how to form positive, culturally respectful relationships with Navajo parents. Teachers visit students' homes and learn about reservation life and the rural conditions in which students live; teachers visit an average of eight homes each month.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Developing a successful school-family partnership must be a whole school endeavor, not the work of a single person or program. Traditional school organization and practices, especially in secondary schools, often discourage family members from becoming involved. For example, survey data show that parents of older children are less likely to attend a school event or volunteer at their child's school than parents of younger children. Sixty-one percent of principals of Title I elementary schools report that most or all of their parents attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, compared with 22 percent of principals of Title I middle schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

To create a welcoming environment for parents, one that enlists their support in helping their children achieve, schools sometimes adopt changes that make them more personal and inviting places. Schools can reorganize, dividing into schools-within-schools, or adopting block scheduling (which includes longer class periods), for example, to promote closer interaction between teachers and students and, by extension, between teachers and families. Schools can solicit parental input to help make decisions on curriculum, course scheduling, assessment, and

budget matters. Traditional parent participation events can be redefined to create more meaningful ways to welcome and involve parents in school life. Whatever steps schools take to develop close partnerships with families on behalf of students' learning, schools that are most successful are prepared to reconsider all of their established methods of doing business and to restructure in ways that will make them less hierarchical, more personal, and more accessible to parents. Restructuring schools to create a more personalized environment for students and their families is an especially important issue for secondary schools, where parents face special barriers to becoming involved and where parent involvement does in fact drop off significantly.

For many successful schools, the first step in the restructuring process is to assess families' interests and needs.

Designing Parent Involvement Around Family Needs

For many successful schools, the first step in the restructuring process is to assess families' interests and needs. By asking parents to share their interests, needs, ideas, and goals for family involvement on an ongoing basis, families and staff members can work together to make family involvement a centerpiece of school reform. By contrast, families that hesitate to become involved in schools often complain that administrators and teachers develop parent involvement strategies based on what they think parents want and need, and not on what parents say they want and need.

Several programs highlighted in this report address this concern by conducting needs assessments through parent surveys, focus groups, or door-to-door neighborhood walks to gather ideas from parents about how best to promote family involvement.

- Staff members at the district-sponsored Buffalo Parent Center develop and plan their services based on surveys and information gathered from monthly "town meetings" where parents voice concerns and suggestions.

- As already noted, Roosevelt High School conducted a Walk for Success event, where teams of faculty, parents, and other community members walked door-to-door to talk with parents about their needs and gather ideas about how to improve the school.

Successful schools include parents as active partners in the school restructuring process.

Parents as Partners in Schoolwide Restructuring

Successful schools include parents as active partners in the school restructuring process. Rather than the traditional hierarchical relationship between families and schools, where school staff make unilateral decisions, successful parent involvement approaches work to develop parents as leaders and equal partners in the schooling process. One way to do this is to create organizational structures for parent participation, such as parent and volunteer committees. Parents can also serve on other school decision-making committees, such as site-based management councils and school improvement teams. As members of these committees, parents can, for example, share ideas and help make decisions on school policies related to the budget, teacher and principal hiring, schoolwide plans, and parent involvement activities. Together, parents and staff members develop school reform initiatives to facilitate closer student, teacher, and parent relations and to increase student achievement.

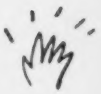
Several schools profiled for this report have developed creative ways to involve parents in school decision-making:

- Parents at Roosevelt High School serve on "ore teams" to address school reform issues. Recently, parents played an active role in curriculum reform by helping secure a waiver from the Texas Education Agency to implement block scheduling, a plan they anticipated would improve both student attendance and achievement. (While both have risen recently, this may be due to many factors.) Core team parents also work closely with the community to assess family needs and strengths and to develop an action agenda for the school. A school organizer for the Alliance Schools Initiative in Texas said, "The most challenging aspect of getting parents involved is to help them understand that they don't always need to be at school for a particular problem, but they can also be part of a constituency that develops a broad-based plan to improve the school." This message is apparently getting through to Roosevelt parents; while approximately 10 parents attended the first PTA meeting in 1993, about 200 attended the first meeting in 1996.

- Turnbull Learning Academy involves parents on decision-making committees such as the parent leadership committee and the school-site council. Parents on the school-site council help develop the school improvement plan, a process that includes planning new programs and reviewing existing

programs as well as the school budget. After scheduling a vote to determine whether parents were interested, parent leadership at Turnbull developed a proposal for a voluntary school uniform policy. An overwhelming majority of parents voted in favor of the policy, which the school board approved in the spring of 1995.

- At Atenville Elementary, parents stressed to parent leaders and school staff on a community-wide steering committee that they were concerned about the difficult transition for students as they moved from elementary schools to seventh grade at the local high school. As a result, a subcommittee on transitions was added to the community-wide school improvement steering committee. The subcommittee recommended block scheduling, similar to the scheduling that students encounter in high school, for fourth- through sixth-graders. The proposal was accepted and students now receive instruction in three blocks: (1) language arts, (2) math, and (3) social studies and science. All state-required subjects are integrated into these three areas.



Schools can take simple steps to make parents feel welcome.

New Uses of School Space

Schools can take simple steps to make parents feel welcome. For example, hanging a welcome sign or posting a parent volunteer in the entrance hall to welcome visitors, sign them in, and direct them to classrooms or the office makes a much more comforting first impression than the ubiquitous sign instructing visitors to "report to the office." Similarly, many parents express uneasiness over the elaborate security measures schools use to combat violence and drugs. Schools could consider creating alternative entrances for parents where security measures are less obtrusive.

Several schools have taken additional steps to make their schools physically welcoming for parents. They have turned unused classrooms into on-site family or parent centers, giving parents a space in which to convene for parent-teacher meetings, borrow books and other learning materials, hold workshops, conduct volunteer activities, or simply have coffee and lunch with other parents and school staff.

- South Delta Elementary's parent resource center is open every school day and contains curriculum supplies, copier and laminating machines, and work tables so that parents have the tools they need to help teachers prepare lessons and activities.

Listening to parents and working with them to build family involvement often leads to innovative, meaningful participation activities that extend beyond the traditional back-to-school nights and bake sales.

- As of the 1996–97 school year, Ferguson Elementary school is structured into four kindergarten through grade 5 learning communities, each of which occupies its own space and benefits from the support of a parent support teacher or community leader. Each community leader is responsible for supporting the curriculum, instruction, and discipline within a learning community. In addition, Ferguson's parent center, which is located in an empty classroom on the second floor of the school, welcomes parents each school day. The center offers parents resources such as information on parenting skills, listings of job opportunities, and information about available programs for parents at the local library and at nearby community centers. An average of six or seven parents visit the parent center each day. The center is staffed in the mornings by a paid parent who operates a lending library of educational materials such as "big book" story books and accompanying audiotapes and activity guides that parents can use with their children at home. Temple University provides training and support for the parent who staffs the center.

Moving Beyond Traditional School-Family Activities

Listening to parents and working with them to build family involvement often leads to innovative, meaningful participation activities that extend beyond the traditional back-to-school nights and bake sales. For example, Buhrer Elementary's Block Parent Meetings take school events to families who live far away from school, enabling them to become informed about school issues and stay in touch with teachers, principals, and other parents. Ferguson Elementary's Parents Make a Difference conference offers parents an opportunity to form ties with teachers and other parents, take a close look at classroom life, and attend workshops on student learning. Roosevelt High School's Walk for Success program takes teachers and other school staff out into the surrounding neighborhoods to talk with parents and begin to develop meaningful parent-school partnerships. Other examples of events that bring parents, students, and teachers closer together include:

- At Cane Run Elementary, parents accompany school staff on out-of-town retreats to discuss curriculum planning, assessment, and other educational issues. Teachers say that the retreats provide an opportunity to "educate parents on views from inside the school looking out, rather than outside looking in." Teachers and parents also have a chance to gain a

better understanding of each other's perspectives. These types of activities may have contributed to the growing Cane Run PTA membership, which has increased from 60 to 700 since 1990.

- In response to its high rate of poverty and mobility among migrant workers, beginning with the 1996–97 academic year, Rodney B. Cox Elementary School became a full-service school, providing dental care, counseling, and health care to students and their families. A new building where some of these services will be available was recently completed on the school's campus. Additional services will be available by referral. Parents participated in the design of the building, which houses the nurse and the health paraprofessional, the dentist, a parent involvement office, and migrant student recruiters. The building provides a kitchen for students and adults to use. School leaders hope that offering these health and social services to families will allow students to concentrate more effectively on achieving success in school.

Bridging School-Family Differences

Language and cultural differences as well as differences in educational attainment separating families and school staff can make communication and family participation in school activities difficult.

Language and cultural differences as well as differences in educational attainment separating families and school staff can make communication and family participation in school activities difficult. For example, survey data show that parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate in school-based activities, and more likely to participate in fewer activities over the course of the school year (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Still, many Title I schools with innovative leadership and creative, hard-working staff have found ways to bridge these differences and cultivate meaningful school-family partnerships.

Reaching Out to Parents With Little Formal Education

Schools today work with a diverse group of parents, some of whom may not easily understand all of the written communications sent to them, and may see themselves as unprepared to help their children with homework or schoolwork. In addition, parents who have bad memories about their own experiences in school may have trouble helping their children with schoolwork, especially in subject areas that they themselves did not master. Among the schools we studied, some creative solutions to this barrier included parent meetings that review activities non-readers can carry out with their children to promote literacy.

Even for parents who read well, the prospect of helping with their children's schoolwork is often daunting.

At South Delta Elementary, school staff focus on home learning activities for non-reading parents by using newspapers. For example, parents and children look at ads and make price comparisons or discuss the weather, which often includes pictorial representations of the weekly forecast. At Turnbull, the bilingual parent involvement coordinator makes telephone calls to relay written information about student progress to non-readers on a weekly basis.

Even for parents who read well, the prospect of helping with their children's schoolwork is often daunting. Many parents are haunted by their own memories of school, and are uncomfortable in a setting that brings those memories back. One school district hired a third-party contractor to operate a Mom and Pop Mobile to expand its outreach to include those parents who are uncomfortable in school settings. The Mom and Pop Mobile specifically targets parents of private school students receiving Title I services. Through the traveling resource center, these parents learn effective parent involvement strategies, such as how to help students engage in learning activities at home.

Parents may also doubt their ability to help their children master new content, especially in math and science. Schools can help allay these fears by giving parents a chance to experience first hand what their children are learning in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening.

- The Family Math and Family Science nights held in Maine's SAD #3, which attract about 200 families district-wide each year, are modeled after the program developed by the Lawrence Hall at Science at the University of California. Children and parents together explore math or science activities including games that families can then play at home.

- Twice a year, the Alamo Navajo Community School's Parents as Teachers Program dismisses students at 1 p.m. to make time for an hour and a half hands-on workshop for parents and their children. Topics include language and math skills development, reading, and cooking with children. School staff also combine parent meetings and open houses with community events, such as basketball games, in order to draw more parents to the school.

Breaking the Language Barrier

Fifty-five percent of Title I schools report that they serve parents with limited English skills (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Although differences in language between parents and school staff often exist in large urban areas with growing immigrant populations such as Imperial Beach, California, or Cleveland, Ohio, they also challenge schools in rural areas such as Alamo Navajo Community School, where the entire reservation community is Navajo and only 35 to 40 percent of the school's professional staff are Navajo.

Many schools successfully use bilingual parent liaisons, instructional aides, counselors, and parent volunteers to reach out to families.

Most strategies for addressing language barriers include some form of bilingual services for communicating with families about school programs and children's progress. Many schools successfully use bilingual parent liaisons, instructional aides, counselors, and parent volunteers to reach out to families through a variety of school-home communications as well as parent workshops or classes.

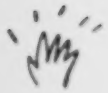
Translation services. Several schools we studied provide translation services for parent involvement activities including school-home communications, parenting training, and participation in decision-making and school governance.

- Cleveland Public Schools requires each school to develop a school-community council to provide families with information about school programs and discuss school governance issues. At Buhrer Elementary, bilingual teachers or volunteers attend the meetings to serve as translators. In addition, Buhrer Elementary School publishes both its parent handbook and newsletter in Spanish, English, and Arabic. Bilingual instructional aides or parent volunteers make calls and translate messages from teachers to parents, often uncovering previously unknown reasons for student absences or discipline problems.

- The bilingual parent involvement coordinator at Turnbull Learning Academy and bilingual staff at Hueco Elementary ensure that all school-home communications, including newsletters, announcements, and information about student progress are published in both Spanish and English. In addition, at Hueco the principal and assistant principal conduct all school-home communications and parent workshops and meetings in both Spanish and English. To ensure that parents can actively participate in these events, the district used

For Parents with Little Formal Education, Literacy Can Be a Family Affair: Clinton Kelly Elementary School

Portland, Oregon



According to Clinton Kelly's principal, for as long as anyone can remember, Clinton Kelly students have been among the poorest in the city. The Portland neighborhood surrounding the school, known as Lents, suffers from frequent evictions, high unemployment and crime rates, and the principal estimates that two out of three Kelly students have an immediate family member or close relative in jail or who has been incarcerated. The principal realized that if she were ever going to connect with students she would need to reach out to their parents. She began to reevaluate the ways teachers and other school staff communicated with families.

This principal also soon realized the futility of activities such as sending home newsletters encouraging parents to read to their children, when many parents in the community couldn't read or couldn't read well. To reach those parents with little confidence in themselves or their language skills, the Family Stories Project was born.

The Family Stories Project makes literacy a family affair. Family Stories helps parents improve their reading and writing skills by developing their own oral and written family histories and sharing them with their children. About 30 parents meet for two hours weekly to share written stories or poems, write in their journal, check out library books to read with their children at home, or join their school-age children in language development activities. For example, parents often make up a story with their child, which the parent writes and the child illustrates. To date, Kelly has published two volumes of Family Stories, which have been distributed to parents and teachers—who integrate the stories into their curriculumas well as to the State Department of Education, university faculty members, and other Title I schools upon request.

Because the 30 women who participate in the project have about 90 children among them, the principal estimates that about 120 adults and children have benefitted from Family Stories. This year, the Family Stories parents and children will keep a portfolio of work to reflect on their development over the year.

According to one mother, "My daughter loves to come to hear and tell stories.... She has learned to become a story teller herself. [She] will spend at least an hour telling stories to her brother and teaching him how to tell stories too."

federal funds to purchase translation equipment that includes a wireless microphone broadcaster, which the translator speaks into, and headsets with FM receivers for those needing translation. Due in part to these efforts to reach more parents, the number of Hueco parents involved in at least one activity increased from 30 percent in the 1994–95 school year to 80 percent in 1996–97.

- Alamo Navajo Community School uses a local AM radio station to address the communication barriers between Navajo families and the many non-Navajo school staff. School staff use the station to announce upcoming meetings and events, broadcast educational programming for both adults and children, make health-related public service announcements, and interview school and community members about current issues or events. About 70 percent of the programming is in Navajo. In addition, home liaisons fluent in both Navajo and English conduct an average of 25 home visits each month to address discipline, academic, and attendance problems, as well as help families with paperwork for programs such as special education or translate during parent-teacher conferences.

- At Cox Elementary, bilingual teachers attend the monthly parent events to translate for Spanish speakers as part of events ranging from "make and take" workshops and other academically oriented activities to multi-cultural presentations.

Workshops and classes in parents' first language. Several districts and schools also conduct bilingual workshops or classes designed to provide parents with information and ideas about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities. At Turnbull Learning Academy, parent training on topics such as helping children with homework are offered in Spanish and English. The South Bay Union Elementary School District offers a wide variety of year-round parenting classes in several languages. Parent training that ultimately helps students learn at home during the non-school hours often includes adult ESL classes. The Family Resource Center at Charter Oak School, the Buffalo Parent Center, and Turnbull Learning Academy regularly offer ESL classes for parents and other adults.

Parent training that ultimately helps students learn at home during the non-school hours often includes adult ESL classes.

In many schools, a home-school liaison can play a crucial role in reaching out to parents.

Promoting Cultural Understanding

Although breaking the language barrier between English speakers and those whose primary language is other than English constitutes a giant step towards increasing parent involvement in their children's education, building bridges with families of different cultures and backgrounds also deserves special attention if *all* families are to feel comfortable participating in school activities. In many schools, a home-school liaison can play a crucial role in reaching out to parents of different backgrounds and building trust between home and school. Usually the home-school liaison is a parent who lives in the neighborhood or someone else with close ties to both the school and the community. Because the home-school liaison is closely identified with the community and shares the same cultural background with parents, he or she is well-equipped to reach out to parents and invite them to become more involved in their children's education. Through the home-school liaison, schools can build relationships with parents founded on understanding and trust.

In addition, many schools offer training to parents and school staff aimed specifically at bridging cultural differences between home and school. Some of these efforts include:

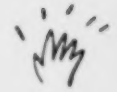
- At both Hueco Elementary and Turnbull Learning Academy, school staff have taken special steps to address cultural differences that stand in the way of parent involvement. For example, staff at these schools pointed out that Hispanic culture regards teachers with admiration and respect, which can result in parents entrusting their child's education solely to their teachers and not participating themselves. To encourage parents to take a more active role, the staff at Hueco emphasize the importance of parents as their children's first teacher and stress how much the school needs and values their involvement; they emphasize these points during the school orientation and at each workshop, parent-teacher conference, and through the newsletter. Staff at Turnbull hold a workshop each fall that emphasizes these same points.

- At Buhrer Elementary, a school-community council meeting involving parents and staff recently focused on Arab culture and how it differs from other cultures, in order to help promote understanding among Arab parents and other parents and staff at the school.

Tapping External Supports for Partnerships

Many Title I schools have nourished and strengthened school-family partnerships by tapping the supports available in their local communities and beyond. Collaborative efforts to provide families and schools with the tools they need to support learning can ultimately benefit all those interested in and affected by the quality of children's education. Among the Title I programs we studied, successful parent involvement strategies often grew out of school-community partnerships with local businesses, agencies, and colleges and universities, as well as supports provided by school districts and states.

Many Title I schools have nourished and strengthened school-family partnerships by tapping the supports available in their local communities and beyond.



School-Community Partnerships That Marshal Additional Resources

Schools rarely have the funds, staff, or space for all the family involvement activities they want or need to offer. Many have forged partnerships with local businesses, agencies, and colleges or universities to provide family services. Among the schools in our study, these services included educational programming and a homework hotline, social services such as prevention of substance abuse and child abuse prevention, conferences and workshops, adult education, health services, refurbished school facilities, and refreshments for and transportation to school-sponsored events. The following examples highlight some strategies schools and communities can use together to expand opportunities for students and their families.

- The Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School works with community partners to meet both the academic and basic survival needs of its students. Hairdressers come to the school to give students free hair cuts, a dental program gives uninsured students free check-ups and dental work, and a business partner provides employee volunteers for mentoring and tutoring.

- Last year representatives from two community organizations, Alivaine Inc., and the Child Crisis Center offered parenting education classes at Hueco Elementary at no cost to parents. A child care worker from the local YMCA also volunteered to provide free child care during parent classes. Local businesses contributed to the Super Readers program, in which children receive awards for the number of books they read at home or have read to them; businesses also provided pizza parties for classes with the most parent volunteer hours.

34

District and state supports for family involvement can include policies, funding, training, and family services that contribute to successful family involvement.

- A local bank and newspaper sponsor the Education Connection at Buhrer Elementary, which is a homework voice mail system that enables teachers, instructional aides, and the school psychologist to leave outgoing messages such as a daily homework assignment and to receive messages from parents who want to ask questions or set appointments. Through a partnership with Baldwin-Wallace College, Buhrer offers parents GED courses. The school has scheduled parent-teacher conferences at the local library and YMCA, which are closer to parents' homes, and the principal contacts parents' employers if necessary to request time off so parents can meet with teachers.

- Ferguson Elementary offers an adult evening school in conjunction with nearby Temple University. Last year classes included computer literacy and self-esteem building and were free of charge to parents. This year, classes will include computer literacy, ESL, and Spanish. Teachers, parents, and other community members receive stipends from Temple to teach the courses, and Temple also provides stipends for child care as an incentive for parents to attend.

District and State Level Support for School-Family Partnerships

District and state supports for family involvement can include policies, funding, training, and family services that contribute to successful family involvement. With the backing of these district and state supports, school-family partnerships have a strong chance of succeeding, and schools can draw on a broad system of expertise and experience. District and state-run parent resource centers, described earlier, are one example of how schools can benefit.

A statewide effort we reviewed, the Alliance Schools Initiative, is a partnership among the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Interfaith Education Fund (TIEF), and the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF). Its mission is to develop a strong decision-making, community-based constituency of parents, teachers, and community leaders who work to improve student achievement in low-income communities throughout Texas. The TEA provides maximum flexibility to participating campuses willing to redesign their educational programs. Teachers and principals agree to collaborate with parents, with each other, and with TIAF network organizations to design and implement reform strategies. The TIEF coordinators train parents, teachers, and principals in strategies to work together to

improve their schools. Many Alliance schools receive competitive Investment Capital Fund grants from the TEA, which they use for staff development, parent and community training, curriculum improvement, and enrichment programs.

In addition, the schools we reviewed provided many examples of districtwide programs or strategies supporting school-family partnerships:

- Jefferson County Public Schools, which serve Louisville, Kentucky, recently contracted with the Right Question Project to work with half of its middle schools in improving parent involvement. As part of this effort, parents of students at Western Middle School will receive training in helping their children develop critical thinking skills, evaluating their children's educational progress, and helping with homework and project assignments. One indicator of recently improved parent involvement at Western is an increase in the number of parent conferences. From fall 1995 to spring 1996 the number of conferences increased from 90–280.

- The DeForest School District in Wisconsin has teamed with the local public library (which is also the local Even Start site) to sponsor a family involvement and literacy program using Epstein's framework of six types of family involvement (Epstein, 1995). It includes adult basic education and ESL as well as parenting activities. Regular participation in Even Start and Family Involvement and Literacy programs has increased by at least 25 percent over the last three years.

- South Delta Elementary School offers parents district-sponsored training through the Title I office. Last year, these training sessions explained the scoring process and the results of standardized tests as well as a workshop on how parents can increase their children's vocabulary. In addition, a district tutorial liaison instructs parents and children in the use of computer equipment.

- Comprehensive family services, such as those offered through the South Bay Union Elementary School District's Interagency Committee can provide the base of well-being that families need to contribute time and energy to their children's education. This committee, developed in 1990, responded to the growing need for schools and community services to collaborate to meet the increasing health, literacy, and social

Comprehensive family services. . . can provide the base of well-being that families need to contribute time and energy to their children's education.

service needs of its many disadvantaged families. Representatives from 25 different health, social service, public and governmental agencies piloted several school-based programs, including adult literacy, family violence prevention, and support groups for students and parents.

Effective school-family partnerships benefit all involved school staff, parents, and students.

Effects on Students and Families

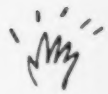
Effective school-family partnerships benefit all involved school staff, parents, and students. Research demonstrates that parent involvement can be an important contributor to student achievement. Effective school-family partnerships can have important benefits for parents as well, helping them to perceive their children's school in a more positive light, enhancing their sense of efficacy as parents, and changing their perceptions of their children as learners (Ames, 1993; Epstein, 1991).

Student Achievement

The experience of the schools and district programs reviewed for this Idea Book supports the conclusion that family involvement can have significant effects on student achievement. Appendix B presents evidence of improvement in student outcomes, wherever it was available, for each of the school or district programs highlighted in this Idea Book. Although it is impossible to attribute student achievement gains or other positive outcomes in any of these schools or districts solely to their parent involvement activities, it does appear that many schools that make parent involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve. For example, of the 13 schools highlighted in this Idea Book and reviewed in appendix B, eight report gains in student achievement over the last one to three years, four report gains in attendance rates or attendance rates remaining consistently over 95 percent, and two report substantial decreases in disciplinary referrals over the last several years. These positive outcomes may be due to increased parent involvement itself, or, what is more likely, to a whole constellation of factors, including a strong instructional program and a commitment to high standards for all students. Further study of these programs would be needed to determine the relative influence of these various factors. Nevertheless, it appears that strong parent involvement is an important feature of many schools that succeed in raising student achievement.

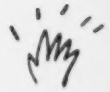
Other Indicators of Success

Most of the schools and programs highlighted in this Idea Book offer evidence that their parent involvement efforts have changed parents in some way. For example, most schools report that more parents are volunteering at school, attending parent-teacher conferences, or signing up for parenting workshops. Evidence of effects on parents among the schools featured here, however, is limited to these measures of participation in school-based activities. In fact, there is little indication that most practitioners in general have done much to evaluate their parent involvement efforts beyond these "body counts." There is a need for evaluation designs that will help practitioners understand, for example, how various parent involvement strategies affect parents' interactions with their children at home, what strategies work best with varied populations of parents, and what kinds of staff development prompt better practice among school staff.



Conclusions About Establishing and Sustaining Partnerships

Experience in many schools and districts points to some common characteristics of successful school-family partnerships. Schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members in the education of their children invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses. Successful schools view children's success as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders—including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders—play important roles in supporting children's learning. Indeed, successful schools adopt a team approach, where each partner assumes responsibilities for the success of the school-family partnership.



Schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members in the education of their children invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses.

At the same time that successful partnerships share accountability, specific stakeholders must assume individual responsibility in order for partnerships to work. Above all, schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating school-family partnerships. Schools can invest heavily in professional development that supports family involvement, create time for staff to work with parents, supply necessary resources, design innovative strategies to meet the needs of diverse families, and provide useful information to families on how they can contribute to their children's learning.

Once schools initiate the dialogue and bring parents in as full partners, families are typically ready and willing to assume an equal responsibility for the success of their children. Ideally, this partnership takes place in a context where policymakers, community groups, and employers share the goals of the school and actively contribute to the attainment of those goals. In sum, a broad-based coalition of like-minded stakeholders is the foundation of any successful partnership. When community members work together, all stakeholders—and especially children—stand to win.

Although the most appropriate strategies for a particular community will depend on local interests, needs, and resources, successful approaches to promoting family involvement in the education of their children share an emphasis on innovation and

Although success in school-family partnerships rarely comes easily, the pay-offs to children and their educational success can be well worth the hard work required to forge and sustain the partnerships.

flexibility. The experiences of the local schools and districts included here suggest the following guidelines for effective home-school partnerships:

There is no "one size fits all" approach to partnerships. Build on what works well locally. Begin the school-family partnership by identifying, with families, the strengths, interests, and needs of families, students, and school staff, and design strategies that respond to identified strengths, interests, and needs.

Training and staff development is an essential investment. Strengthen the school-family partnership with professional development and training for all school staff as well as parents and other family members. Both school staff and families need the knowledge and skills that enable them to work with one another and with the larger community to support children's learning.

Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships. Plan strategies that accommodate the varied language and cultural needs as well as lifestyles and work schedules of school staff and families. Even the best planned school-family partnerships will fail if the participants cannot communicate effectively.

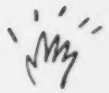
Flexibility and diversity are key. Recognize that effective parent involvement takes many forms that may not necessarily require parents' presence at a workshop, meeting, or school. The emphasis should be on parents helping children learn, and this can happen in schools, homes, or elsewhere in a community.

Projects need to take advantage of the training, assistance, and funding offered by sources external to schools. These can include school districts, community organizations and public agencies, local colleges and universities, state education agencies, and Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers.[4] While Title I program funds support the parent involvement activities of many programs featured here, several have increased the resources available for parent involvement activities by looking beyond school walls.

Change takes time. Recognize that developing a successful school-family partnership requires continued effort over time, and that solving one problem often creates new challenges. Further, a successful partnership requires the involvement of many stakeholders, not just a few.

Projects need to regularly assess the effects of the partnership using multiple indicators. These may include indicators of family, school staff, and community participation in and satisfaction with school-related activities. They may also include measures of the quality of school-family interactions; and varied indicators of student educational progress.

Although success in school-family partnerships rarely comes easily, the pay-offs to children and their educational success can be well worth the hard work required to forge and sustain the partnerships.



Notes

1. The Idea Book is a companion publication to a recent report to Congress (U.S. Department of Education, 1997) that identifies and describes: (1) common barriers to effective parental involvement in the education of Title I participating children; and (2) successful local policies and programs that improve parental involvement and the performance of participating children.

2. Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended (P.L. 105-17), requires that children and youth with disabilities have an IEP. The IEP is a written document developed in a team meeting. A representative of the school who is qualified to provide (or supervise the provision of) special education and the student's teacher(s) must attend. Parents must be invited and may attend. The student may also attend, at the discretion of the parents.

3. A schoolwide program may use its Title I Part A funds, combined with other federal education funds, to upgrade the school's entire educational program rather than to deliver federally supported services only to identified children. By affecting the entire program of instruction, the overall education of children in high poverty schools can be improved. Beginning with the 1996-97 school year, Title I participating schools with a poverty level of at least 50 percent can choose to become a schoolwide program.

4. The role of the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers is to support and assist states, school districts, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of funds under the IASA by providing technical assistance in: (1) implementing school reform to improve teaching and learning for all students; (2) adopting, adapting, and implementing promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning; and (3) coordinating IASA recipients' school reform programs with other educational plans and activities so that all students, particularly students at risk of educational failure, are provided opportunities to meet challenging state content and performance standards.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

References

Ames, C. (1993). Parent involvement: The relationship between school-to-home communication and parents' perceptions and beliefs. Report No. 15. Baltimore, MD: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.

Eagle, E. (1989). Socioeconomic status, family structure, and parental involvement: The correlates of achievement. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement* (pp. 59–60). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Epstein, J.L. (1991). Effects on student achievement of teachers' practices of parent involvement. *Advances in Reading/Language Research*, (5), pp. 261–276.

Epstein, J.L. (1995, May). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, pp. 701–712.

Fruchter, N., Galletta, A., & White, J.L. (1992). *New directions in parent involvement*. New York: Academy for Educational Development.

Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (Eds.). (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement* (A report from the National Committee for Citizens in Education). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Moles, O. (1996). *Barriers and successes in involving Title I parents*. Unpublished manuscript.

Rioux, J.W., & Berla, N. (1993). *Innovations in parent and family involvement*. Princeton, NJ: Eye on Education.

Toomey, D. (1986). Home-school relations and inequality in education. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement* (1994) (pp. 138–139). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Turnbull, A.P., & Turnbull, H.R., III. (1990). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: A special partnership* (second edition). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (1997, February). *Overcoming barriers to family involvement in Title I schools: Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994, September). *Strong families, strong schools: Building community partnerships for learning*. Washington, DC: Author.

Ziegler, S. (1987, October). The effects of parent involvement on children's achievement: The significance of home/school links. In A.T. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.), *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement* (pp. 151–152). Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Appendix A

Profiles of Successful Partnerships

Profiles of Successful Partnerships

The 10 programs profiled here were selected to represent a mix of effective strategies to promote family involvement in elementary and secondary schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the country. Six of the profiles describe school-level parent involvement programs:

- Atenville Elementary School in Harts, West Virginia
- Cane Run Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky
- Rodney B. Cox Elementary School in Dade City, Florida
- Ferguson Elementary School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Hueco Elementary School in El Paso, Texas,
- Wendell-Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School in Kansas City, Missouri

A seventh profile describes a school program—Roosevelt High School in Dallas, Texas—that is part of a statewide initiative to develop strong community-based constituencies of parents, teachers, and community leaders as a strategy to increase student achievement in low-income areas throughout the state.

Two profiles (the Buffalo Parent Center in Buffalo, New York, and the Parent Resource Center in Stockton, California) describe centers that provide services and activities for families districtwide, helping students and parents alike gain the skills and motivation they need to stay involved with their local schools.

The remaining profile describes the districtwide parent involvement program offered by Maine's School Administration District #3. Appendix B includes a summary of all 20 programs included in the Idea Book.

Although success in school-family partnerships rarely comes easily, research shows that what families do to help their children learn contributes greatly to student success in school. The following profiles illustrate how some schools and districts are breaking down the barriers to family involvement in schools. While all have experienced some success in building and nurturing family involvement, solutions to one problem often raise new challenges. School staff as well as parents in all of these programs recognize the need for continued attention to and improvement in the school-family partnership.

Each of the following profiles first provides an overview of the program as well as school and/or district background information. The profiles then present the particular strategies that are bringing families and schools together in support of student learning.

Drawing on interviews with school principals, teachers, and parents, the strategies include:

- overcoming time and resource constraints;
- providing information and training to parents and school staff;
- restructuring schools to support family involvement;
- bridging school-family differences; and
- tapping external supports for school-family partnerships.

Finally, the profiles include each school's or program's evidence of success in strengthening the school-family partnership, both in terms of increasing the numbers of parents participating in activities and improving student performance.

Atenville Elementary School:
Parents as Educational Partners in a Rural Setting
Lincoln County Public Schools
Harts, West Virginia

Overview

The Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) Program at Atenville Elementary School seeks to overcome the geographic isolation of families in rural West Virginia by improving home-school communication and providing varied opportunities for parent involvement. School administrators and staff credit the program with increasing student achievement, attendance, discipline, and self-esteem. The program, developed through action research conducted by teachers and parents, includes a number of activities designed to improve communication with families, encourage parent involvement in the classroom, increase parent leadership and decision-making at school, support learning at home, and improve parenting skills. To ensure that families also receive the support services they need, the program coordinates access to a range of health and social services offered by other community and national organizations.

Context

Atenville Elementary School is located in a rural coal-mining community in southern West Virginia. The community struggles with high unemployment and poverty, and is geographically isolated from county social service agencies, which are located about one hour away in the county seat of Hamlin. Many Atenville families receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and 83 percent of the school's population is eligible for free or reduced price lunches. All 213 students in grades preK–6 at Atenville are white. Most come from families who have lived in the Appalachian Mountains for generations. During the 1996–97 school year, Atenville began implementing a schoolwide program.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

In the spring of 1991, Atenville applied to work with the Parent-Teacher Action Research project at the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) in Boston, Massachusetts. This partnership resulted in the school developing its PEP program, which began during the 1991–92 school year. The major components of PEP include a "telephone tree" staffed by parent volunteers, a home visiting program, a parent coordinator, and the Atenville family center.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

One challenge Atenville faces is that some parents do not own telephones or have access to adequate transportation. As part of the PEP program, parent volunteers disseminate information and calendars of upcoming events by mail and through word of mouth. To help parents attend meetings

and events, the principal and teachers often arrange to pick up and transport those parents who do not have their own transportation.

Home visits target hard-to-reach parents. The principal and teachers often visit the homes of parents who, for one reason or another, have difficulty coming to the school building. Teachers use release time to conduct their home visits, while the principal and other teachers cover their classes. The principal usually conducts her home visits on the weekends. The school's parent coordinator and telephone tree parents conduct about 20 home visits per year to families that are not actively involved in the school or whose children are experiencing difficulties in the classroom. The parent coordinator, who has been trained in home visiting, accompanies all school staff and volunteers on these visits.

Time and resources for teachers to reach out. All teachers at Atenville have telephones in their classrooms to communicate with parents throughout the day. Teachers use these telephones to call parents whose children are absent or are misbehaving in class, as well as to report a child's good progress. A daily in-school planning period and a duty-free lunch period afford teachers the time to call and meet with parents. In addition, students are dismissed one-half hour early on Thursday afternoons, and teachers and parents serving on various committees can use this time for program planning.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

The PEP program relies heavily on communication between families and schools and on training for both parents and school staff. In response to requests from parents for improved communication, Atenville established its telephone tree in February 1992. Telephone tree parents volunteer to call 20 to 25 families at the end of each month. During these calls, telephone tree parents tell other parents about school activities scheduled for the coming month, solicit feedback on the prior month's activities, and ask parents for suggestions on future activities and services. Two examples follow:

- Because many parents expressed concern that early dismissal on snow days meant their children were being sent home to empty houses, telephone tree parents call all parents on days when the school will be closed or dismissed early due to snow. If the telephone tree parent cannot get an answer at the child's house on an early dismissal day, the child's emergency care card is checked and an alternate contact person (such as a grandparent or a neighbor) is called.

- More recently, telephone tree parents learned that parents were worried about their inability to help their children with a new math curriculum implemented during the 1992–93 school year. In response, the school offered two evening workshops to help parents master the skills emphasized by the new curriculum, which focuses more on complex word problems and less on traditional computation skills. About 20 parents participated in the workshops, which were conducted by the local high school's seventh and eighth grade math teacher.

Telephone tree parents receive training from the school principal on telephone courtesy and on parent/teacher confidentiality. In addition, they are trained to make home visits. Monthly meetings

with the principal and parent coordinator enable telephone tree parents to share information and receive instructions for their monthly communications with parents.

Support for learning at home. To help parents serve as their children's first teachers, Atenville offers parent workshops about seven times each year on topics such as how to increase language development among young children, how to help children learn to read, how to help children with math, how to increase children's self-esteem, how to help with homework, and basic information about whole-language reading instruction and portfolio assessment. An average of 25 parents attend each workshop, with turnout sometimes as high as 75 parents. Workshops are held in the school's family center during the day and taught on a volunteer basis by the principal, teachers, or the IRE facilitator.

Training for volunteers. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at Atenville to assist teachers in the classroom, provide teachers and administrators with logistical support, and help supervise children in the library and during lunch and recreation periods. As a result, about eight to ten parents volunteer at the school each day. The school offers parents two volunteer training sessions each September; to accommodate parents with varied schedules, one session is offered during the day and the other at night. These sessions not only teach parents about school policies, particularly in the areas of discipline and confidentiality, but also provide them with guidance on assisting teachers in the classroom as teacher aides and tutors. About 100 parents participate in the training each year.

Training staff to collaborate and set goals. The PEP program is guided by the school improvement council and an action research team (composed of the principal, two teachers, two parents, a parent coordinator, and an IRE project facilitator), which was formed to support efforts to make parents true partners with teachers in the educational process. All members of the action research team receive training on action research two or three times a year from IRE. Last year, team members received two two-day training sessions on: (1) collaboration and action plans and (2) goal-setting. Team members share these new skills with other teachers and parents on the two or three staff development days scheduled each year. In addition, all teachers meet with the parent coordinator at the monthly faculty senate meetings to discuss the parent involvement program and to receive feedback gathered from the telephone tree and home visits.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

The PEP program represents a major commitment from the school staff and community to improve student achievement by restructuring the school to support a successful school-family partnership. Restructuring efforts included assessing family needs, designing a family center to serve as the headquarters for parent volunteer activities and to house the parent coordinator, and maximizing parent decision-making.

Assessing family needs. One of the first steps taken by Atenville was to hire a part-time parent coordinator in December 1991. In late 1991 and early 1992, the parent coordinator and other parent volunteers conducted home visits to gather information on how families viewed the school and to seek their input on the design of the parent involvement program. During the 1994–95 school year, information was also collected from focus groups involving parents, teachers, students, and the entire Harts community under the direction of the community-wide school improvement steering committee. The school program and the PEP program continuously adjust their services based on

information gathered from these sources. For example, the focus groups showed that parents were concerned about their children's transition from elementary school to junior high school. As a result, a subcommittee that included one parent and one staff member each from Atenville, Ferrellsburg Elementary, and Harts High recommended block scheduling, similar to that implemented in the high school, for fourth through sixth graders. This recommendation was implemented during the 1995–96 school year. Together the parent coordinator and the telephone tree provide school staff with the means to gather useful parent perspectives on a variety of education-related issues.

New uses of school space to welcome parents. A key component of the PEP program, the Atenville family center serves as the headquarters for parent volunteer activities at the school and houses the office of the parent coordinator. Established in the fall of 1991, the center posts important school-related information for parents. Also, the center is the location for preschool and kindergarten registration, for parent workshops, and for PTA meetings. To encourage communication among teachers and parents, the family center also serves as the teacher workroom and as an informal lounge for parents and teachers to meet and have coffee or lunch together. Teachers are encouraged to spend their planning periods in the center and to eat lunch there whenever possible. Between eight and ten parents and 16 teachers visit the family center each day.

> "When I first started coming to the school it was hard, I felt really out of place. It's not like that anymore... it's homey, parents feel comfortable. I think a lot of us spend more time at the school than at home."
>
> Parent, Atenville Elementary School

Maximizing parent decision-making. Parents participate on all committees at Atenville, including the action research team, the 13-member school improvement council that guides all school decisions, and the 11-member schoolwide program planning team that was formed last year to develop the schoolwide plan for Title I.

A parent from Atenville also sits on a community-wide school improvement steering committee that guides school reform for the entire community, including the expansion of the PEP program to the local high school and the other elementary school in Harts. Atenville parents sit on all 11 subcommittees of this steering committee, addressing issues such as curriculum, staff development, building and facilities, parent involvement, and health and wellness. A subcommittee on transitions to high school specifically engages parents of older children to determine strategies for easing the transition from sixth grade to seventh grade.

In developing its schoolwide program this year, Atenville received an additional boost in its parent involvement activities through a newly developed school-parent compact. Although Atenville has had a parent involvement policy for some time, the schoolwide program planning team revised the plan in the spring of 1996 to reflect the goals of the PEP program. Staff, parents, and students drafted the compact at an open meeting attended by 15 parents, three teachers, two students, and the principal. The compact assigns specific responsibilities to students, parents, teachers, and the school principal, in order to help all Atenville students meet West Virginia's high student performance standards.

For example, students agree to attend school regularly and be ready and prepared to learn. Parents agree to provide a good learning environment at home by assisting their child with homework and providing a consistent time and place for homework. Teachers agree to continually change and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, maintain high expectations for all students, and participate in ongoing staff development. The principal agrees to fulfill a number of responsibilities, including communicating and working with families and staff to support students' learning and providing a safe environment for learning. The school presented and distributed the compact to all parents who attended an open house potluck supper during the first week of school. Those parents who missed the open house received a home visit from the parent coordinator and a telephone tree parent to review the compact. All parents also received a handbook on how to become involved in their children's education.

Bridging School-Family Differences

> "It was almost as if the parents were saying, 'They're your responsibility during the day, you teach them,' and the teachers were saying, 'They're your responsibility in the evening, you make sure they're prepared to do well in school.'"
>
> Teacher, Atenville Elementary School

Both parents and teachers report that building comfort and trust between school and home is an intensive and ongoing process. At the start of the program, many parents did not trust the teachers or the school—too many parents had negative school experiences of their own. As a result, the school established new partnerships to provide parents with the educational assistance they need, and many parents who participated in school-sponsored adult education classes have gone on to receive their General Educational Development (GED) credential and enroll in four-year college programs. On the other side of the coin, many teachers did not want parents in their classrooms because they viewed them as a disruption. One helpful strategy has been the appointment of the parent coordinator, who is seen as an important asset in bridging school-family differences. Yet Atenville has found defining the role of the parent coordinator to be a challenge. To build trust among both parents and teachers, parents need to think of her more as a parent, yet staff need to think of her more as a staff member. Both parents and staff need to feel like the parent coordinator is "on their side." For example, when parents and school staff disagreed over the use of whole language strategies for reading instruction, the parent coordinator served as a mediator between the two.

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

The PEP program is funded primarily through Title I, Goals 2000, and IRE. Atenville has established several partnerships to meet various family needs. For example, to help parents improve their own skills, the school and Southern West Virginia Community College cosponsor for-credit courses in computers and math. Parents can participate in classes at the school for two hours (one hour for each class) every Monday evening during the fall semester. Atenville teachers who conduct the classes receive $250 stipends from the community college. All other costs are covered through a grant from the Benedum Foundation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Last year, 32 parents participated in these classes.

Atenville also works with national organizations to provide families with needed materials and services. Monthly donations from Children, Inc., a program based in Richmond, Virginia, provide the school with clothing and other material goods for needy families. Through a partnership with Youth Works, a religious organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 60 to 70 youth volunteers come to Atenville every year for six weeks during the summer to help families with housecleaning, home repairs, and other needs.

To ensure that children have access to health care, a pediatric mobile unit paid for by the West Virginia Children's Health Project visits the school each Thursday. The family center serves as the waiting room for those needing to be seen by staff of the pediatric unit, and a parent volunteer acts as receptionist. A local dentist volunteers by visiting the school once a year to provide all children with free dental screenings. After the screenings, each parent receives a checklist of the dental services their child needs. The parent involvement program at Atenville has also served as a catalyst for the establishment of a community library at the local high school funded through the Goals 2000 program.

Evidence of Success

Parent involvement at Atenville Elementary has increased dramatically since the PEP program began. During the 1995–96 school year, parents volunteered more than 7,000 hours at the school, compared with 2,000 hours during the 1991–92 school year. In 1995–96, 100 parents, representing almost half of the families at the school, participated in the annual volunteer training.

Student achievement has also increased since the program began. At the end of the 1991–92 school year, Atenville third and sixth graders scored in the 59th and 58th percentiles, respectively, on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). At the end of the 1995–96 school year, third graders scored in the 71st percentile, and sixth graders scored in the 63rd percentile. According to a survey question on the CTBS, the percentage of sixth-grade students who believed that they would graduate from high school and attend college grew during this time period from 72 percent to 79 percent. In addition, the number of students participating in an after-school tutoring program increased from 21 to 62 over a recent three-year period. Student discipline has also improved. Suspensions have decreased from 12 during the 1990–91 school year, to an average of 3 per year since then. Student attendance rose slightly from 93 percent in 1991–92 to 94 percent in 1995–96.

School staff also note that parents are now more organized and more vocal about decisions that affect their children. Recently, the Lincoln County Board of Education sought to reconfigure Atenville and another district elementary school by placing K–3 in the other school and grades 4–6 in Atenville. Parents from Atenville challenged the board's decision based on their experience with the PEP program. They argued that the K–6 model fosters a more sustained interaction between home and school, and that disrupting this relationship would decrease parent involvement. As a result, the board reversed its decision. The success of the PEP program has not only served as a catalyst for similar parent involvement programs at two other schools in the district, Ferrellsburg Elementary and Hart High School, but has also encouraged a community wide school improvement effort.

Buffalo Parent Center:
A Large Urban School District Gives Parents a Place of Their Own
Buffalo Public Schools
Buffalo, New York

Overview

The Buffalo Parent Center opened its doors in 1989 in response to a request from the district's parents for "a place of our own; something we can access seven days a week." Housed in the Urban League building in downtown Buffalo, the parent center offers services and activities for all families in the school district, with priority given to families whose children receive Title I services. Center activities include family literacy training, parenting education, computer training, and tips on helping with homework. Except for adult education classes, all learning activities at the center are designed so that parents and children can participate together. The numerous opportunities for family-oriented learning include two computer labs with more than 90 computer workstations, a discovery room and hands-on science center, and a robotics laboratory. A restored grand piano, violins, drums, and other instruments are available so that parents and children can take music lessons together. Families also learn about telecommunications by using interactive videos, such as an "electronic balloon ride over New Mexico," and by recording themselves in an on-site television studio. Some parents videotape themselves reading and interacting with their young children and then review the tapes as a way of improving their parenting skills. The Center not only provides activities and resources that some local schools may not be able to provide on site, but ultimately helps parents and students gain the skills and motivation they need to stay involved with their local schools.

Context

Buffalo Public Schools is a large urban school district that serves about 48,000 children from birth through grade twelve. Fifty-three percent of the district's students are African American, 34 percent are white, 10 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are American Indian or Asian. Fifty-nine percent of its students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program.

The parent center operates year-round, except for school holidays. During the school year the center is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; it closes one half-hour earlier during the summer. The center's Even Start Family Literacy program serves the same group of families for an entire calendar year; all other programs operate on a semester basis. Activities take place within one of three daily sessions: morning, afternoon, or evening. During morning sessions parents with young children engage in developmentally appropriate learning activities and parenting skills training. In the afternoon and evening sessions, families with older children take parent and child computer courses, and participate in tutoring and homework sessions or nonacademic classes such as art, aerobics, and music. Evenings are the busiest time, with 25 to 40 families attending the center.

The center employs about 30 staff members, including 7 specialists in adult and early childhood education, 3 home liaisons employed by the Even Start program, a full-time computer

teacher, and teachers from the public school system who serve as mathematics, reading, and language specialists.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

To reach as many parents as possible, center staff along with parent volunteers publicize the center's services and activities in schools, at shopping malls and grocery stores, via mailings and fliers, and through door-to-door visits in neighborhoods. Additionally, Title I schools invite parents and their children on field trips to the parent center, where center staff give tours, answer questions about the center, and provide parents and students with opportunities to use the center's technology, music, and art resources. Staff say that on these field trips, "the center sells itself." For example, children who visit the center unaccompanied by their parents often return with their parents in tow.

Through the many center workshops, programs, and tutoring opportunities, parents not only learn how to become partners in their children's education both at the center and in their own local schools, but can also work on achieving their own educational and personal goals.

> "We need to motivate parents to make a commitment to come [to the center]. [It's] more than 'your child needs additional help....' Attractive activities and services bring them in ... [and] when their child performs better, then they commit [to being involved]."
>
> Assistant Superintendent of Federal Programs, Buffalo Public School District

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Recognizing that some parents may have difficulty finding the time or means to visit a parent center regardless of where it is located, the district housed the Buffalo Parent Center near a downtown main rapid transit line. The center issues free tokens for families to ride the public transit system; it also maintains three buses for added convenience. In the near future, the center plans to operate mobile learning units that will bring teachers and learning resources directly to neighborhoods. Parents who need child care can (and are encouraged to) bring the whole family to the center, which provides a nursery for infants.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

The parent center holds regularly scheduled meetings for parents conducted by the Title I District Advisory Council. The meetings prepare parents for decision-making roles by updating them on changes in Title I, relevant local and state education issues, and Title I budgets and services. Other center activities are designed to attract parents of older students and provide information and training on opportunities for parents and children to learn together, especially during non-school hours.

Training to attract parents of older students. Center staff recognize the difficulty schools face in reaching out to parents whose children are middle and high school students. To address this problem, the center maintains an extensive collection of computer and telecommunications technologies to attract older children, teenagers, and their parents. Two evenings a week, approximately 40–50 students in grades 6–12 and their parents participate in a parent/child computer program. (Families who sign up for a semester- or summer-long program are expected to attend regularly.) The center urges families to work together on all technology learning activities; the program software and work stations accommodate parent/child teams. Older children and their parents can create documents with desktop publishing software, improve their math and science skills using custom-designed curricula created through a satellite hook-up with a software company, produce video tapes, and learn robotics and computer programming. For parents who resist interacting with teachers, this array of technology opens up new possibilities for learning that move beyond traditional teacher/student relationships. In addition to technology-based opportunities, older children and their parents can also participate in courses on conflict resolution and trust-building through the parent center. For example, an outdoor ropes course, used in such outdoor education courses as Outward Bound, teaches parents and children to trust each other and work as a team.

Training to help parents and children learn together. Other Parent Center activities focus on parents and children learning together through the use of tutors, computers, family literacy activities, and extensive educational opportunities for parents. These include:

- **Homework labs and afterschool tutoring**. The center employs 10 to 12 part-time tutors for small group work with parents and children in all of the center's programs. Most tutors are college students from the State University of New York at Buffalo, University of Buffalo, and other local universities. Also, every year three or four high school students, who are former students at the center, return to tutor younger children and their parents. Tutors assist parents and children in the resource center, where families complete their respective homework using CD-ROM computers and software programs. Because parents accompany their children during learning activities, tutors also are able to model tutoring techniques for parents.

- **The Take Home computer program**. For families who participate in an orientation, the Parent Center has 140 portable computers that it loans for five- to six-week periods. The families are nominated for the program by their children's Title I teacher, who has an agreement with the center to refer those children who are most in need of supplemental academic work. Reading and math specialists at the center map out an individualized plan for each family and select appropriate software and materials. Parents and children are expected to work together on the computer at home every day. After the six-week period, the Parent Center tests the children to evaluate their progress; center staff report that children who completed the daily program demonstrate substantial improvement. Parents also complete a survey at the end of the program to report its impact on learning and motivation.

- **The Even Start Family Literacy program**. More than 60 families with children under the age of eight are enrolled in the center's Even Start program, which is offered in collaboration with the local adult learning center. Parents in the adult education program agree to accompany their children to the Parent Center for a minimum of 12 hours a week. Time at the Parent Center is set aside for "parent and

child time" in the early childhood center, where families can use developmentally appropriate computer programs. The parent center also employs home liaisons who conduct home visits with the Even Start families once a week. Parents in the Even Start program have an array of choices to meet their own educational needs, including: classes in adult basic education to earn their GED, computer literacy training that can lead to advanced courses and college credit, English as a Second Language courses, and classes in parenting skills.

- **Parenting Courses**. According to a teacher at the center, the Parent Center "incorporate[s] lots of personal improvement for parents so they always feel successful and commit themselves to learning and to being involved with their children." More than 100 adults at the center participate in activities geared toward their own education and enrichment, including sewing and wearable arts, aerobics, adult basic education classes, advanced computer classes for college credit, and parenting seminars. Staff at the center take advantage of community resources such as college professors and adult educators to expand the educational opportunities open to parents.

> "We have shown parents that it's important to play an active role in their children's learning. They want to know what's going on in the classroom, and they attend parent/teacher conferences, even when they used to miss them. Now that they've learned more about what their child's needs are, [parents] know how to focus on that and make sure the child is learning."
>
> A Parent Center staff member

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

The Parent Center works with several organizations to provide services to parents and families. For example, the center collaborates with the local adult learning center to expand its array of educational courses for adults. Also, because it shares a building with the Urban League, the Parent Center has formed a partnership to provide comprehensive social and medical services to families. Parents who come to the center benefit from having staff from the Urban League available to help them at the same location. In some cases, the League has helped Parent Center participants find housing and employment.

With other community agencies the center co-sponsors special events and outings to revitalize families and to keep parents and children interested in learning together. For example, in collaboration with the local YMCA, Salvation Army, and Boys and Girls Club, the center organizes camping trips, outdoor education courses, trips to the aquarium, and outings to university theatrical productions and local restaurants. To participate in special events, a good attendance record at the center is required of families, parents and children alike.

Evidence of Success

Over the course of a year, the district's Title I director estimates that the center serves about 3,000 parents, with a core of 250 families enrolling in ongoing programs such as adult education, parent/child computer courses, or the family literacy program.

Center staff also point to changes in parents and children that they attribute to participation in Parent Center activities, including:

- Parents now support and motivate one another to play a greater role in the educational lives of their children. Staff remark that "new parents are embraced by other parents" and often meet outside of the center to organize family events together. "Parents become a community and a support network," says one staff member.

- Several students who participate in the center's tutoring program with their parents have gone on to become tutors for younger children in the program.

- Each year the Parent Center surveys parents who participate in the Take Home Computer Program, an activity that serves children identified by their classroom teacher as being "most in need" of supplemental academic help. A survey of the participants in the 1994–95 program indicated that 44 percent of parents reported that the program had a "significant" effect on their child's motivation toward learning; 52 percent indicated some effect. Virtually all parents reported noticeable or significant improvements in their children's math and reading skills, and 64 percent reported that the program had significantly enhanced their child's knowledge of computers.

In addition, the parent center is tracking the academic achievement of students whose parents participate in center activities.

The Parent Center's programs ultimately help to increase parent involvement at local schools. For example, parents learn about their child's curriculum and how to supplement what their child learns through learning activities parents initiate at home. Parents also have received training that teaches them important questions to ask their child's teacher, such as what exactly is meant when a teacher indicates a child is "doing well" in class. In this situation parents might ask whether their child is doing well in comparison to other children in the class, or other children in the district or state, and with what specific skills their child still needs practice.

Cane Run Elementary School:
A Parent-Friendly, Family Focused Urban School
Jefferson County Public Schools
Louisville, Kentucky

Overview

At Cane Run Elementary, parents are an integral part of the day-to-day operation of the school. Through the school's PTA and site-based decision-making team, parents work alongside school staff to set policy, raise funds, administer programs, hire new staff, and organize events. Formal programs, such as an on-site Even Start Family Literacy program and a state-funded Family Resource Center, bring parents into the school to volunteer, advance their education, and receive health or social services. But more important than individual policies or programs, says the principal, are the "million little things" the school does to make parents and teachers partners in children's education. The staff at Cane Run create a "parent-friendly, family-focused" atmosphere through their curriculum choices and communication strategies; in addition, they provide numerous opportunities for parents and teachers to collaborate on projects that benefit students.

Context

Cane Run Elementary serves the urban community of Louisville, Kentucky, which is located in the Jefferson County Public Schools district, one of the country's 25 largest school districts. Approximately 80 percent of Cane Run's 450 students in K–5 are eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program. The school's student population is 50 percent African American and 50 percent white. The 1996–97 school year marks the beginning of Cane Run's schoolwide program.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

The barriers to parent involvement at Cane Run resemble those faced by many schools: parents' busy work schedules and the need for child care and transportation prevent parents from attending school events, while teachers struggle to find ways to reach out to parents. The school staff has found that meeting families' basic needs, being flexible when drawing parents into school activities, and finding new ways to communicate with parents can result in higher success rates for children at school.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Meeting families' basic needs. Cane Run staff wanted to increase both the overall number of parents who were involved at the school and the types of activities in which they participated. Using funds from the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), Cane Run established a Family Resource Center, which provided the school with a strong base of support services for building parent involvement. The Family Resource Center serves the families of all children who attend the school, as well as members of the surrounding community. A full-time coordinator with experience in victim

as well as members of the surrounding community. A full-time coordinator with experience in victim advocacy and social work links families with mental health counseling, medical services, social services, and other community resources. Staff and volunteers help families directly by collecting clothes or food for them in emergencies, transporting them to and from school-related meetings, accompanying them to social service agencies, and paying their GED testing fee. The center coordinator receives guidance and recommendations on services and programming from parents who serve on the Family Resource Advisory council.

The Family Resource Center also sponsors an affordable after-school program from 3:30 to 6 p.m. every day. As part of the program, parent volunteers and paid staff members offer children tutoring, access to computers, karate classes, games, and other activities. The center charges families $10 a week for the program, but families who are unable to pay can waive the fee by volunteering their time at the school or at the center.

In addition to the after-school program, Cane Run uses Title I funds for a Jump Start program for 40 three- and four-year-olds. On Mondays through Thursdays, the program conducts morning and afternoon sessions for preschoolers at the school, with the goal of helping young children develop the skills they will need for success in school. On Fridays, Jump Start staff members visit participating families at home.

Flexible times and places for parent involvement. School staff maintain flexible schedules because they recognize that parents are often unable to visit the school or attend meetings due to transportation difficulties or an inability to be excused from work. "You have to start with their schedule," explains the principal, an approach that sometimes results in holding meetings outside the school building or after business hours. When parents visit the school without a formal appointment, teachers cover for each other to allow for impromptu parent-teacher conferences. Also, the school recognizes that some parents who are unable to get to the school nevertheless still want to participate in school events. Staff help these parents volunteer their services for the school and Family Resource Center by having them conduct mailings, make telephone calls, and write newsletters out of their homes. In addition, staff often arrange transportation for parents who need it, either by giving them bus tokens or by offering them a ride.

Helping staff communicate with parents. Even though Cane Run welcomes many parents through its doors every day, exchanging messages between home and school still poses a challenge to staff and parents. Cane Run teachers deliver notes or other information in person to the homes of students when all other attempts to reach parents have failed. The school recently installed an answering machine so that parents can leave messages around the clock; during the day the telephone system forwards all incoming calls to separate extensions so that the line remains as free as possible. Teachers can call families from any of Cane Run's numerous telephones located in the PTA room, library, staff workroom, computer lab, and conference room, each of which provides a list of student names and telephone numbers.

> "Communication is the biggest challenge. You have to be committed to getting the message home, even if it means going in person."
>
> Principal, Cane Run Elementary School

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

The computer check-out program. In 1993, the school purchased 30 laptop computers and then held training sessions for families interested in checking them out overnight or on the weekends. According to the principal, older students (in grades four and five) in particular enjoyed using the computers and teaching their parents how to use them. The computers proved to be so popular that the school now offers Family Technology Nights; as the principal explains, "We realized that getting families together to learn about technology really works" as a way to get parents involved in children's education.

Family Technology Nights. Cane Run hosts Family Technology Nights, which evolved from the school's computer check-out program. The school holds an average of five Family Technology Nights each year, with 20 to 40 parents and children in attendance at each session. As with the computer check-out program, the technological focus of the project has been particularly successful in drawing older students (grades 4 and 5) and their parents. Parents and children who attend the evening activities can use the school's television studio, Internet hook-ups, desktop publishing programs, and other equipment. One father said that attending a Family Technology Night with his family was such a positive learning experience that it prompted him to buy a home computer for his family.

Training to improve parent and child learning skills. Cane Run's Family Resource Center offers information and training for parents and students to improve their learning skills. For example, the center has sponsored workshops for parents and children to learn to use the Internet together. The center also sponsored a workshop entitled Parents Helping Children to teach parents how they can help prepare their children for testing. The workshop was held in the evening, and dinner and child care were provided. Additionally, the Family Resource Center, in collaboration with the Even Start program, offers parents with a GED additional training in several academic subject areas.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Empowering parents to make decisions. Parents of Cane Run students have long played an active role in educational decision-making because Cane Run formed a site-based decision-making council several years before the schools were mandated by the state to do so. Consequently, when the 1990 KERA mandated that schools operate such a council, Cane Run was ahead of the game. Its council, consisting of five teachers, four parents, two classified staff members, and the principal, has policy-making authority over approximately 90 percent of the daily operation of the school. Parents on the council help interview job candidates, control the school's $2 million budget, and make decisions regarding curriculum, discipline, use of space, and other matters. The principal notes that the council is not merely advisory; it empowers parents to take part in running the school.

"Parents on our site-based decision-making council become truly educated on how a school works from the inside. The challenge for us was to figure out how to explain everything in a language they understand—not educational jargon. The burden of that is on us, to help parents understand."

Principal, Cane Run Elementary School

In addition, since 1990 the PTA has greatly expanded its membership by speaking to local businesses and community groups and by building a rapport with hard-to-reach parents during school drop-off and pick-up hours. As a result, PTA membership has grown from about 60 parents in 1990 to the current level of more than 700 parents and community members. The PTA has received more than 30 awards for exemplary attendance, and in 1995 the organization won the state PTA's highest award for a local unit, the Overall Advocate for the Child award. The former PTA president explains that "once we had a rapport [with these parents] and they knew somebody [in the PTA] it was easier for them to join."

Moving beyond traditional school-family activities. Every year as many as eight parents attend an out-of-town retreat, together with teachers, administrators, and other school staff. The attending parents represent the school's three formal panels on which parents serve: the Family Resource Center Advisory Council, the School-Based Decision Making council, and the PTA board. Other interested parents may attend the retreat as well. Everyone attending participates in workshops on best instructional practices and in activities such as bookmaking, which teachers can use in their classroom and parents can use at home. In addition, parents can attend meetings on curriculum, planning, student assessment, and other educational issues. By attending the retreat, parents and teachers are able to socialize and gain a better understanding of each other's perspectives.

"We have parents who become much more sympathetic to our job once they see it from the inside, and [once] we hear their view on what they want for their kids."

Principal, Cane Run Elementary School

Bridging School-Family Differences

Cane Run offers parents the opportunity to experience first hand what their children are learning in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening, an arrangement that can be especially attractive to parents who may doubt their ability to help their children master new content.

"We create an atmosphere where parents are truly comfortable to come into the school building. They want to come back, and they feel that they are part of the school."

Principal, Cane Run Elementary School

Cane Run offers an Even Start Family Literacy program that provides parents with valuable skills that they can use to support learning at home. More than 20 families enroll in Cane Run's

Even Start program each year. Parents in the program can earn a GED in classes offered in the school building, work with their preschool-aged children in the on-site early childhood center, and volunteer to help with older children in classrooms. Even Start staff run an infant and toddler nursery in the school and offer classes in parenting skills. By attending school alongside their young children, Even Start parents show their children that they value education. Through this on-site work and home visits conducted every Friday by Even Start teachers, the program also helps parents learn techniques for taking a more active role in their child's education both at home and in the classroom.

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

Cane Run is in its first year as a schoolwide program. The principal explains, "Title I is really infused into everything we do, and as a schoolwide program that will be even more true." His goal for Cane Run's first year as a schoolwide program is to cultivate a small cadre of parents who understand and advocate the schoolwide concept. The best way to garner that kind of support, he says, is to help parents understand how Title I dollars translate into services and improvements throughout the entire school.

Cane Run also receives major support, in funding and policy direction, from the state's education reform initiatives. KERA funds support the coordinator and assistant of the Family Resource Center as well as its overall operation. KERA also supports the school's efforts to implement reforms (such as improving parent involvement) that will increase student achievement by holding schools accountable for outcomes—in particular, student performance on a statewide assessment. The Family Resource Center funding, based on the free-lunch count, is appropriated by the state legislature through the Cabinet for Families and Children.

Evidence of Success

"We create an atmosphere where parents feel truly comfortable to come into the building, and they want to come back," according to the principal. The principal, the Family Resource Center coordinator, and the PTA president all agree that the best measure of the school's success in drawing parents into the school building is the day-to-day presence of parents—helping in classrooms, doing volunteer administrative work, contributing to policy decisions, taking adult education classes, seeking services at the Family Resource Center, meeting with teachers, or just visiting the school. The Family Resource Center coordinator emphasizes that the daily functioning of the center depends heavily on parent volunteers. An average of four parent volunteers work in the center every day, helping with data entry, telephones, and administrative work. The coordinator says parents "jump right in, because this is their community, their school."

School staff estimate that an average of 30 parents visit the school daily, but that five years ago that average was close to zero. One significant indication of the successful involvement of parents in school operations is the four-year, $100,000 integrated arts grant that the school was awarded in 1992. In winning that grant, Cane Run became the first Kentucky school to include parents in both its grant writing process and its presentation to the state grant committee.

The principal points to steady but modest increases in math and reading scores over the last four years. Attendance has remained steady over the years at about 94 percent. Over the last two years, disciplinary referrals—tracked through the school's database—have decreased by 30 percent each year.

Rodney B. Cox Elementary School: A Small Town, Full Service School
Pasco County Public Schools
Dade City, Florida

Overview

To design and implement a parent involvement program around family needs, Rodney B. Cox Elementary School is becoming a full service school that will provide dental care, counseling, and health care to students and their families, with additional services available by referral. Recently, the school constructed a new building on its campus to house some of these services, along with a parent involvement office and offices for migrant student recruiters. Parents participated in the design of the building and in the overall plans for what services would be provided. School faculty work toward involving parents in the school's academic programs in order to increase child and family literacy. To do this, the school offers parents numerous workshops on topics ranging from literacy to how to use manipulatives with children at home. This year, Cox began to offer two GED classes, funded through state adult education programs, with books and materials funded by Title I.

Context

Cox is the oldest school in Pasco County, and many of its students are the second or third generation in their family to have attended the school. Although the community shares many characteristics with urban areas, it is located approximately 30 miles north of Tampa in a semi-rural, small town. Cox has implemented a schoolwide program, and enrolls 512 students in grades pre-K–5. Ninety-three percent of students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Migrant students make up 21 percent of the school population, and there is a 56 percent mobility rate among students. The migrant families typically arrive at the school in mid-October and leave in mid-April. They work at a large citrus-packing plant near the school and also in nearby fields picking fruits and vegetables.

Forty percent of students at Cox Elementary are African American, 44 percent are Hispanic (many of whom are limited English proficient), and 16 percent are white. All students live within a two-mile radius of the school, and most live in two nearby low-income housing projects. Many parents do not read or write well themselves, although, the principal notes, they have high hopes for their children and want them to succeed in school.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

Cox faces two major barriers to parental involvement: (1) parents' lack of transportation and telephones, which makes communication between the home and school difficult in this rural community, and (2) parents' negative perception of school in general, which they have revealed on yearly anonymous parent surveys. The principal and her staff have found ways to minimize these obstacles and to help families build the base of support they need to dedicate time and energy to their children's education.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Many of the school's efforts focus on overcoming both the isolation and the economic hardship faced by many parents. Cox finds home visits by teachers and other staff an excellent way to reach parents who lack telephones or adequate transportation, and the staff also recognize that meeting other family needs, such as those for meals and child care, are effective strategies for attracting parents to school functions.

Outreach strategies to keep parents informed. About 20 percent of Cox students have telephones in their homes, and many families have no car. To help parents get the information they need about their children's school life, Cox requires teachers to make quarterly home visits; in fact, most teachers exceed this requirement. Although teachers do not receive extra pay for the home visits, the principal says that teachers see the value in making the effort to reach out to parents and scheduling the time for these visits. Most often, the parent involvement coordinator takes teachers to the homes of students after school. In addition, the full-time parent involvement coordinator and the migrant recruiters enhance communications by obtaining necessary parent signatures, recruiting parents for school committees and councils, and driving parents and teachers to ensure their presence at conferences or medical referrals arranged by the school staff.

The principal discovered that parent participation increases at school meetings when a meal is provided. Parents who volunteer at school during the day also receive a free lunch, which is paid for by fund-raising events and vending profits. In addition, as an added incentive, many school events are followed by a performance given by the students.

More teacher time to communicate with families. The school encourages parents to drop in to see teachers during their daily planning time, 8:00 to 9:00 a.m., as well as throughout the school day. Teachers can use their 45-minute special period (during physical education, art, music, or media) to meet with parents. The principal ensures that there is enough support staff available to cover classes if a parent needs to meet with a teacher. "We don't ever want parents to feel unwelcome here, even if I have to go cover a class myself," she said.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

Cox has made a concerted effort to dispel parents' negative images of school by offering events to make them feel welcome, providing parents with training on how to work with their children at home, and by training staff to support parents' efforts to work with their children.

Training parents to support learning at home. The school provides monthly events for families that include "make and take programs" as well as workshops; each of these events attracts 60 to 200 parents. This year, at the parents' request, the monthly programs will alternate, with one session being held in the evening and the next taking place in the afternoon to accommodate parents' different work schedules. Bilingual teachers attend each meeting to translate for Spanish-speaking family members. These sessions include a preparation night for the Stanford Achievement Test (which is the test the district uses for all students in grades 2–5), an open house, spelling contests, speech contests, Primary Reading Intervention (a reading program for first and second graders), game night, multi-cultural night, and authors' day (an event when students present books they have

created). Committees consisting of teachers and parents select the topics and events for these monthly programs.

Additional parent training for 1996–97 includes free adult education classes offered at Cox two days per week through the Moore Mickens Adult Education program. The principal expects that participating in these classes will help parents gain the self-confidence they need to feel comfortable helping their children with academics and interacting with school staff.

Training staff to teach parents as well as students. All teachers from Cox attended a workshop during the summer of 1996 called Parents Exploring Teaching and Learning Styles (PETALS). This three-day workshop for teachers taught them how to identify individual learning styles so that teachers can then help both parents and students learn while having fun. A reading specialist who participated said that as a result of this workshop, "You understand why one person approaches learning one way and another approaches the same material in another way. That is important for teachers." Teachers have found the PETALS training useful both in the classroom and in working with parents.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

According to the principal, her greatest challenge is making it possible for parents to interact comfortably with school staff. To help parents feel more comfortable, the school makes special efforts to meet their needs and communicate with them.

Designing parent involvement around family needs. In response to the high rate of poverty and mobility among the migrant population, beginning with the 1996–97 academic year, Cox became a full-service school, capable of providing dental care, counseling, and health care to students and their families. Recently a new building where some of these services will be available was completed on the school's campus. Additional services will be available by referral. Parents participated in the design of the building, which houses the nurse and the health paraprofessional, the dentist, a parent involvement office, and migrant student recruiters. The building provides a kitchen for students and adults to use. School leaders hope that offering these health and social services to families will allow students to concentrate on achieving success in school.

In addition, Cox's School Advisory Council (SAC), composed of the principal, teachers, parents, and community members, regularly surveys all parents and school staff to identify the school's needs. Surveys taken during the 1995–96 school year identified the following as strategies to implement by 1998:

- Offer parents computer training at the school
- Publish a monthly newsletter
- Send a daily communications folder home with students so that parents can keep current on their children's work

- Inform parents about programs and schoolwide activities by using bilingual fliers (in English and Spanish), an outdoor sign, the monthly newsletter, and the local television news, WCOX

- Record parent volunteer hours with the goal of increasing the time parents spend at the school

- Organize the business community to sponsor Career Clubs through which students can explore potential careers

Dedicating resources to building school-family communication. Several school and district employees serve a liaison function between the school and parents. For example, the school employs a full-time parent involvement coordinator, who is a certified teacher with no classroom responsibilities. He assists classroom teachers in their efforts to promote and encourage parental involvement. Teachers who don't wish to make home visits by themselves can request that he accompany them on their visits. The parent involvement coordinator also leads an activity he designed to help build students' self-esteem and to promote strong morale among all members of the school community. Each week he takes pictures of paraprofessionals, parents, and teachers as they interact with students. These pictures are published by a local newspaper, along with a brief caption identifying them and describing what they do at the school and outside the school.

> "[It is important] to create a comfort level that [will allow parents] to freely verbalize their concerns...."
>
> Principal, Rodney B. Cox Elementary School

Including parents in school decision-making. In response to the new Title I requirement for school-parent compacts, the Cox SAC reviewed several other schools' compacts before designing their own. The goals for students, parents, and teachers during the upcoming year are outlined in the compact. For example, students agree to attend school and arrive on time, maintain a positive attitude, and respect themselves and the rights of others. The Cox staff accepts its responsibility not only to provide an orderly classroom and a high-quality instructional program that meets students' needs but also to assist families in meeting their children's needs. Parents accept the responsibility to send their children to school, check their work regularly, and communicate with teachers and students. The compact is signed each year, and recent student test scores are written on the top so that parents can assess their children's progress.

> "At first it was difficult to get the parents to school unless there was a problem. They now see that we are not just providing a service; they are a vital part of their children's education... It is what we want."
>
> Reading specialist, Rodney B. Cox Elementary School

Evidence of Success

During the 1995-96 school year 74 adults registered to serve as volunteers at Cox. The parent involvement coordinator reports that 10 to 20 of these registered volunteers work on campus each day. In addition, Cox Elementary has begun monitoring parent involvement, and it reports consistently high levels of both family and school staff participation for monthly parental and community involvement events. For example, up to 200 parents participate in workshops each month.

Student test scores on the Stanford Achievement Test have increased over the past two years. In the 1994-95 school year, 31 percent of students scored at about the 50th percentile in math and 14 percent scored at that level in reading. In 1995-96, 61 percent of students scored above the 50th percentile in math and 34 percent scored above the 50th percentile in reading.

Ferguson Elementary School:
Restructuring an Inner-City School to Support Family Involvement
School District of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Overview

Ferguson Elementary School gets parents involved in their children's education by offering them a variety of opportunities through which they can improve their parenting and teaching skills and participate in school decision-making. When the Philadelphia public schools moved to site-based management in 1990, a group of Ferguson teachers formed a Parent Involvement Committee to assess community needs and explore strategies for involving parents in their children's education. With input from parents, the committee developed a parent involvement program, which is coordinated by a Title I program support teacher and a full-time school-community coordinator. A parent center established with the help of Temple University serves as the headquarters for parent involvement activities, which include a Parent Network for fostering home-school communication, workshops on parenting and supporting learning at home, support groups for parents and grandparents, and adult education classes. Program success is measured by the growing number of students reading at or above grade level, a reduction in the number of referrals for discipline problems, and gains in student attendance.

Context

Located in inner-city North Philadelphia, Ferguson Elementary School has implemented a schoolwide program serving 750 low-income students in pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population is about 75 percent African American and 25 percent Hispanic. All students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and 98 percent come from families with incomes below the federal poverty line. Most children attending Ferguson live in public housing projects, subsidized housing, or row homes in the immediate neighborhood. To create a more personalized atmosphere for students in this large school, Ferguson will begin the 1996–97 school year by organizing students into four K–5 learning communities.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

The principal and staff at Ferguson Elementary School made several changes to encourage parent involvement, many of which addressed the lack of time for staff and families to communicate with one another, a lack of information and training about the best ways to support family involvement, and the need to restructure the school to make it a more inviting place.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Finding time for working parents. Finding the time for parents and teachers to communicate with one another challenges attempts to bring the two together. Ferguson's Title I program support teacher also serves as the parent involvement program coordinator, and in this capacity, she supervises volunteers, facilitates the parent support groups, and arranges parent workshops and classes. One change she has implemented addresses parents' time constraints. In the past, most parent involvement activities at Ferguson took place during the school day, while many parents were at work. In response to parents' requests, the school now offers more workshops and parent classes on weekends and in the evenings, and it also provides child care services during the parent sessions.

To reach out to parents, Ferguson teachers take the time to meet parents in the school yard each morning before the school day begins. Teachers also use a daily 45-minute planning period to meet with or to call parents. The principal encourages teachers to contact parents when their children are performing well, rather than just when they are performing poorly. Further, teachers are encouraged to go out into the community and visit parents at home to welcome them into the school during three community outreach days each year. Usually, the principal, the parent involvement coordinator, the school-community coordinator, four parents, four students, and four or five teachers participate in these outreach events.

Finding time for teachers. Ferguson's school-community coordinator serves as a critical link between school and home, relieving some of the administrative burden placed on teachers. The coordinator's primary responsibility is to make home visits to families whom teachers have targeted for special attention. Teachers can request a visit for any reason, but most respond to changes in a student's behavior, attendance, or academic progress. In addition to making five or six home visits a day, the school-community coordinator also helps teachers arrange parent-teacher conferences.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

Ferguson parents can participate in a variety of activities that provide them with the information and training they need to build an effective home-school partnership. These activities include:

The Parent Network. A core group of ten parents operates the Parent Network, an outreach strategy that helps ensure ongoing home-school communication. Through the network, parents contact other parents in the school to share information on upcoming school activities and events. Besides distributing informational fliers and monthly newsletters, the network makes two telephone calls to all parents in the school before any school activity that they are asked to attend. On at least three weekends each year, the Parent Network, teachers, the school-community coordinator, and students also conduct door-to-door family outreach to invite parents to the school.

Training parents to support student learning. Ferguson offers a variety of workshops and training opportunities for parents to learn more about how to help their children with schoolwork at home. Last year, the school offered Saturday morning workshops to help parents become active partners in teaching their children the school curriculum. Workshop topics include strategies to motivate the beginning reader, techniques to increase reading comprehension, and hands-on math

activities. Between 100 to 150 parents attended the two Saturday morning workshops held at the end of the 1995–96 school year.

Ferguson also hosts an annual Parents Make a Difference conference. This two-day event invites parents into their children's classrooms to observe and learn new techniques for helping their children succeed in school. While eating a box lunch provided by the school, parents hear talks given by guest speakers from the community, such as authors of children's books. During the conference, parents also participate in workshops conducted by the guest speakers on such topics as how to read to your child in ways to increase their enjoyment and interest in reading. More than 300 parents participated in last year's conference.

A parent support group meets weekly in the parent room during the school day. The group sponsors workshops on parenting skills about six times a year. Workshops topics have included controlling anger, practicing assertive discipline, and preventing child abuse. The school psychologist, the school nurse, the parent involvement coordinator, and community resource people conduct the workshops. A grandparents' support group was also formed that meets three times a year; workshops focus on issues of specific concern to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, including procedures for gaining child custody.

The school supports many parent-training opportunities. Three training sessions for parents and community members in the Community Assistants program are provided; this program provides stipends to parents and other community members to volunteer to work for ten weeks as classroom aides. The Parent Network receives training from the Title I teacher every month on school policies and activities, information they then share with other parents. Ferguson also helps parents increase their own skills by offering workshops during the school day on topics such as accessing community resources or writing a resume; these workshops, which are usually taught by the parent involvement coordinator, are held at least five times a year and are attended by 50 to 60 parents.

Training for staff and parents working together. During the 1995–96 school year, all first-grade teachers received training from Temple University to improve parent involvement. First-grade teachers, Temple trainers, and parents first met to discuss how the school should and could involve parents. Then all first-grade teachers met with Temple trainers to discuss priorities, chief among them being how to get parents to support learning at home and reinforce what students learn at school. Two of the first-grade teachers, along with Temple staff, then offered parents a series of five two-hour workshops on how to help children with reading and math at home. Parents learned, for example, how to use a list of common words to help children make sentences, learn grammar, and sharpen their reading skills; they also learned how to use a "number line" manipulative to help children practice adding and subtracting. Each year, parents who have completed this training help train the parents of new first-grade students.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

To support family involvement, Ferguson has reshaped its school program in several ways. It has created a more personalized and inviting environment by implementing both "schools within a school" and a parent center. They established a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) during the school's transition to site-based decision making, and parent volunteering now includes parents in the classroom to support student achievement.

"We want the same things for the children. By making the parents feel more comfortable, we're able to get their support in helping their children to achieve."

Principal, Ferguson Elementary School

A more personalized and inviting school. As of the 1996–97 school year, the school is structured into four kindergarten through grade 5 learning communities, each of which occupies its own space and benefits from the support of a parent support teacher or community leader. Each community leader is responsible for supporting the curriculum, instruction, and discipline within a learning community. In addition, Ferguson's parent center, which is located in an empty classroom on the second floor of the school, welcomes parents each school day. The center offers parents resources such as information on parenting skills, listings of job opportunities, and information about available programs for parents at the local library and at nearby community centers. An average of six or seven parents visit the parent center each day. The center is staffed in the mornings by a paid parent who operates a lending library of educational materials, such as "big book" story books and accompanying audiotapes and activity guides that parents can use with their children at home. Temple University provides training and support for the parent who staffs the center.

Giving structure to parent decision-making through the PIC. Parents at Ferguson play an active role in school decision-making. Six parents (one for each grade level) sit on the school leadership team that is charged with making decisions on everything from funding to curriculum. In addition, all parents at the school are invited to participate on the PIC, which meets at least twice a month. The PIC was formed in 1990 when a group of teachers involved in the school's move to site-based management wanted to assess community needs and explore strategies for involving parents in their children's education. The PIC determines all parent involvement activities for the coming month, based on parent needs and input from sources such as the Parent Network. Five teachers and two paraprofessionals that serve on the committee are usually joined by three or four parents.

Parent volunteering to support student achievement. Ferguson strongly encourages parents to get involved in their children's classrooms. Through the school's Community Assistants program, stipends and training are available for parents and other community members who commit to serve as classroom aides every morning for ten weeks. Community assistant duties include working with small groups of students, tutoring students one-on-one, preparing bulletin boards, and assisting teachers with copying and making telephone calls. The parent involvement coordinator trains the assistants to do their jobs. There are three ten-week cycles of community assistants per year, with ten assistants serving during each cycle. Most community assistants continue to serve after they have fulfilled their commitment. About 50 parents volunteer as classroom aides each week.

"Every parent has something they can offer, they just need to hear someone say that 'we need you.'"

Teacher, Ferguson Elementary School

To encourage parent involvement, Ferguson offers both parents and teachers incentives for parent participation in school activities. Parents often receive school supplies or prizes such as

tee-shirts for their participation in workshops, and teachers are given pizza parties, popcorn parties, and banners outside their classrooms in recognition of high parent turn-out at workshops.

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

In addition to its Title I support, several community members support Ferguson's parent involvement program. Temple University supports Ferguson on many levels, including:

- **In-kind donations.** Temple provides furniture and other resources and equipment for the parent center, along with a stipend for the parent who staffs the center.

- **Training for school teachers and the parent center staff.** Temple provides customized professional development for Ferguson teachers, and it places a number of its student teachers at the school. The university also provides stipends for teachers of the continuing education courses, which are described below, and for baby sitters who watch over the children of parents while they take these classes and other workshops offered at the parent center.

- **Offering an "adult evening school" at Ferguson.** During the 1995–96 school year, Temple offered classes in computer literacy and self-esteem at no cost to parents. During the 1996–97 school year, computer literacy, English as a Second Language, and Spanish were offered. Courses are taught by teachers, parents, and other individuals recruited from the community who receive a stipend from Temple. Adult evening school classes meet for two hours per week for ten weeks. Last year 24 parents were enrolled in the computer class, and ten were enrolled in the self-esteem class.

The Philadelphia Gas Works utility company also supports the parent involvement program at Ferguson through donations of food and other supplies that parent center staff can distribute to families in need.

Evidence of Success

Ferguson measures program success by monitoring student achievement, student disciplinary referrals, and parent involvement in activities and workshops. Ferguson's parent involvement program appears to have had positive effects on students. The number of first-grade students reading at or above grade level has increased from 5 percent in June 1993 to 37 percent in June 1996. Student discipline has also improved, with the number of disciplinary referrals dropping steadily over the past few years, from 586 in 1993 to 267 in 1996. Average daily attendance is also up to about 90 percent, compared with about 80 percent when the parent involvement program began. Although it is impossible to attribute these improvements solely to the parent involvement program at Ferguson, school officials believe that helping parents become more involved has played a significant role in bringing these changes about.

Parent involvement in school activities has also increased. The 1995–96 fall Open House drew 350 parents, compared with fewer than 30 parents in 1989. Roughly 50 parents volunteer as classroom aides each week. Between 100 and 150 parents participated in the Saturday workshops offered during the spring of 1996, and more than 300 parents participated in last year's Parents Make a Difference conference. In addition, 25 parents received certificates of continuing education from Temple University last year, and one former community assistant is now earning her teaching credential at La Salle University. Another former assistant has been hired as the school-community coordinator at another school in Philadelphia, and four are currently working at Ferguson as full-time classroom aides.

> "I have a better and clearer understanding of what my children need to do in school because of my involvement, and I'm better able to help them."
>
> Parent, Ferguson Elementary School

Hueco Elementary School:
Promoting Cultural Understanding and Communication in a Rural School
Socorro Independent School District
El Paso, Texas

Overview

Parent involvement at Hueco Elementary School revolves around easing the cultural and communication barriers between school staff and parents in this low-income, predominantly Hispanic school. Hueco's parent involvement program, which the principal and a core group of parents developed with a set of clearly defined goals in mind, includes parenting and adult education classes, family math nights, monthly school and classroom newsletters, a parent volunteer program, and home visits. The principal and assistant principal coordinate the program, with help from the school counselor and a parent volunteer coordinator. This year, Hueco adopted the Success for All program developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University to ensure that all children possess adequate reading skills by the time they reach third grade.

Context

Located on the rural outskirts of El Paso, Hueco Elementary School serves 600 children in preschool through grade five. About 98 percent of the children at Hueco are Hispanic, and 95 percent qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches. Because more than half (56 percent) of the children at Hueco are limited English proficient, roughly half of the classes at Hueco offer bilingual instruction. Like all schools in the Socorro Independent School District, Hueco offers year-round schooling, with the school year beginning in July, and three one-month "intercessions" in October, February, and June. Hueco operates a schoolwide program and implements site-based management.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

Hueco staff identified several challenges to its goal of increasing parent involvement in the school, including skepticism and misconceptions among parents and staff about the role each should play in the educational process, a lack of staff training on parent involvement, and language and cultural differences between parents and staff. When the current principal arrived in spring 1993, she set up a parent involvement program to address these barriers.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Finding the time for school staff and parents to communicate can be difficult. For this reason, staff at Hueco are encouraged to conduct home visits, which can take place either during the school day or after school hours. A team that can include the assistant principal, the school nurse, the school counselor, and the child's teacher conduct these visits. The principal requests that teachers make at least one home visit to a student in their class, which can be to the family of a student who is

doing poorly in school or is consistently absent, as well as to a family of a student experiencing success in school. Teachers can use release time during the school day to conduct the visits, while their classes are covered by a permanent substitute assigned to the school, by other teachers, or by classroom aides.

> "When you visit the home, and talk to the parents, and see the conditions the children live in, you are much more understanding of the children and better able to help them."
>
> School counselor, Hueco Elementary School

Although many of the teachers who do not speak Spanish are uncomfortable conducting home visits, they receive support and encouragement through training conducted by a parent involvement coordinator. In addition, the bilingual assistant principal and school counselor accompany teachers on all home visits.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

Based on her experience building parent involvement at another school in the district, Hueco's principal implemented several strategies to make the school more inviting to parents. She began by offering both parents and staff the information and training they need to build self-confidence and trust and to communicate with one another.

Parenting. Hueco offers workshops and classes for parents throughout the year, which have included:

- **A class on effective nurturing skills, called P.S., I Love You.** During the first session of the 1996–97 school year, 30 parents participated in the course, which was taught in Spanish one morning a week by a representative from the Child Crisis Center, a child abuse prevention organization based in El Paso. The class taught parents disciplinary skills, such as how to be firm yet loving with a child, and coping skills, such as how to take personal "time-outs" to avoid becoming too angry with their child.

- **A child development and parenting skills program based on a commercial, video-based parenting curriculum purchased by the school.** Seven or eight parents participated in these weekly classes, with a curriculum designed around using positive discipline, promoting a child's self-esteem, and modeling desired behaviors such as respect and tolerance.

- **A Parent-to-Parent class on drug prevention that included tips on how to talk to children, how to establish limits and rules, and how to help with schoolwork.** Offered in both English and Spanish two mornings a week for eight weeks, the class was taught by a representative from Aliviane, Inc., a community drug abuse and prevention agency. During the 1995–96 year, 30 parents participated in this class, which will be offered again in 1996–97.

Hueco offers parents other courses for their own personal improvement and education. These courses have included:

- **A community health education program for parents**. This 12-week course focuses on promoting good nutrition, preventing communicable diseases, learning about first aid and CPR, and promoting self-esteem and good mental health. Funded and coordinated through the district office of community education, the program drew between 21 and 25 parents, culminating in a graduation ceremony for the parents who earned their certificates in administering CPR and first aid.

- **A citizenship class**, from which 20 Hueco immigrant parents graduated and were sworn in as U.S. citizens.

- **English as a Second Language and GED classes**. During the fall of 1996, 20 parents enrolled in both classes. In addition to the teachers for these classes, the district also hires a child care worker to provide free on-site child care for parents.

- **A computer skills class, taught by a Hueco teacher**. Parents enrolled in this class learn typing, basic computer skills, word processing, and spreadsheets. Last year the computer teacher offered the class to 15 parents. This year, the bilingual education teacher will teach the computer class.

> "As parents become more involved in their own education, they can become more involved in their children's education and see that school is not just for the children, but for the whole family."
>
> Parent, Hueco Elementary School

Training parents to support learning at home. Hueco parents are also encouraged to become involved in their children's education through the Success for All program. Program components for children include a 90-minute reading period at the beginning of each day and homework that consists of reading to a parent or family member for 20 minutes each evening. Children may read books they have at home or borrow books from their classrooms or the school library. Parents must sign a homework log-in sheet to verify that their children are reading to them.

In addition, all families participate in the Super Readers program at Hueco, which provides incentives for parents to read to their preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade children. Children in the second half of first grade and in grades 2-5 also participate in the Super Readers program, although they must read to themselves. Children receive awards for the number of books they read or have read to them; to qualify, the younger children require a parent's signature, and the older children must submit a book report. Every six weeks, the top reader at each grade level receives a Super Reader tee-shirt, and the top two readers in each class receive books and other small prizes.

All participating children get to attend plays during each six-week period, and both they and their parents receive a diploma at the end of the year. The school librarian administers the program and encourages parents to support their children's participation in the program by describing the merits of the program at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings and in the monthly school newsletters sent home to parents.

Engaging working fathers is a challenge for Hueco because the majority of the parent workshops and classes are offered during the school day. This year, the school will develop a father-son/father-daughter program that will offer parent-child learning activities of interest to fathers on weekends or evenings.

Communicating with families. To increase communication with all families and to provide a forum for parents to air their concerns, Hueco began a monthly Parent Communication Council. This council, open to all parents, allows parents to share their concerns about the school with the principal and assistant principal. Last year, issues raised during these forums included the lack of consistency in assigning homework among teachers and the quality of the food served in the cafeteria. Between 20 and 30 parents attend Parent Communication Council meetings.

In addition, Hueco's principal publishes a monthly newsletter for parents that provides school news and parenting information. Individual teachers at Hueco also prepare monthly or weekly supplemental newsletters for parents that provide information on upcoming classroom activities, current topics of study, homework assignments, and tips for helping children complete their homework.

> "Now, there's more of an understanding between the parents and the school...with more understanding, we're better able to help the children."
>
> School counselor, Hueco Elementary School

Staff training. Last year, members of Hueco's School Improvement Team invited a successful parent coordinator from another school district to the team's meeting to share her experiences with parent involvement and home visits. She was invited back to offer all staff this training.

To date, three staff development days have focused on tools for effective implementation of the Success for All program, including tools such as tutoring, cooperative learning, and other strategies for helping children learn how to read. There will be a total of seven similar staff development training sessions during 1996–97. In addition, several teachers, together with parents,

the principal, and assistant principal, will make a site visit to a school in San Antonio that has fully implemented the Success for All program.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Hueco has undertaken some school reforms designed specifically to support family involvement and emphasize collaboration between the school and home. In addition to the Success for All program and its family support team, these reforms include (1) creating a parent volunteer program that relies on parents to help with instructional activities and decisions, along with more traditional volunteering activities, and (2) site-based management to involve parents in school decision-making.

Success for All family support team. As of the 1996–97 school year, Hueco implemented a family support team as part of its implementation of the Success for All program. The team, which will meet twice a month, will be charged with determining actions the school can take to support children experiencing problems with schoolwork or behavior. The Success for All facilitator will provide training for the team members and for parents interested in becoming Success for All volunteer tutors for children. Members of the family support team include the principal, assistant principal, the district psychologist, the Success for All facilitator (who is a former teacher), the school counselor, the school nurse, the librarian, and several teachers.

Volunteering that improves student learning. The parent volunteer program calls on parents to contribute in new ways that include reading to small groups of children in classrooms, tutoring children individually, working in the school library and office, and helping supervise children in the cafeteria and on the playground. Beginning this year, volunteers will also set up a reading corner in the cafeteria during student lunch periods. Every day at least three parent volunteers (two that speak Spanish and one that speaks English) have children read stories to them. For children whose parents are unable to listen to them read on a given night, this reading period satisfies the Success for All homework requirement that children read to an adult for 20 minutes each day.

A parent volunteer coordinates the program, assigns parents where they are needed, tracks volunteer hours, and helps teachers recruit new volunteers. She also administers the monthly volunteer recognition program, which is housed in a parent room that also serves as the classroom for the parent workshops. This room is divided into two halves—a work area and a classroom. There are usually about 50 parent volunteers in the school each week, with 25–30 volunteering daily. To acknowledge their contribution to the school, Hueco holds volunteer recognition ceremonies on the first Friday of each month.

Parent participation in site-based management. Parents participate in site-based management through Hueco's school improvement team. The team meets monthly to discuss progress on school goals and to make decisions on curriculum, instruction, staffing, and budgeting. Two parents serve on this team, along with the principal, assistant principal, ten teachers, the school counselor, the school librarian, and a community representative.

Bridging School-Family Differences

Overcoming language and cultural differences. Between 60 and 70 percent of the parents of children enrolled do not speak English. The prior principal and assistant did not speak Spanish, and upon her arrival, the new bilingual principal began to conduct parent meetings in both Spanish and English. She also instituted an "open door" policy for parents; now, all home-school communications and parent workshops and activities are conducted in both languages. The school purchased translation equipment to ensure that all parents can participate in school activities and events; bilingual teachers and parents serve as translators. As a result of these efforts, parents are more comfortable in school because they can communicate in their own language.

Cultural differences between the home and school also present a challenge. In the Hispanic culture teachers are so highly regarded by parents that many of them entrust their child's education solely to teachers. To encourage parents to take a more active role in their child's education, the staff at Hueco use orientation sessions, workshops, parent-teacher conferences, and other school events to emphasize the importance of the parent as their child's first teacher and to stress how much the school needs and values their involvement.

Boosting parents' comfort with math. Hueco offers parents opportunities to explore math with their children in a non-threatening atmosphere. With the help of a district mentor teacher whose salary is paid by a National Science Foundation grant, Hueco offers a family math program. Two sessions were offered during the 1995–96 school year, 1 for the early childhood students and 1 for the third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders. This year the school offers 4 sessions, one for children in preschool through grade 2, one for children in grades 1 through 5, a combined session, and a final session for students in grades 3 through 5, to focus on skills required for success on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

Teachers and students together plan family math nights. Older students lead the sessions and oversee 10–12 stations with hands-on activities for parents and younger students. These nights focus on themes such as Metric Olympics for students in grades 3–5, where parents and children engage in activities such as estimating the distance traveled by a paper discus at a discus throw station or averaging the distance of several throws at a cotton ball shotput station. Students in preschool through grade two participate in a Cranberry Fair where parents and children explore questions such as, "Do cranberries float?" "How high do cranberries bounce?" "How much do cranberries weigh?" and "What happens if you put a cranberry in a 7-Up?" The number of parents attending the family math nights with their children has increased consistently, from about 30 parents at the first session during the 1995–96 school year to roughly 75 to 80 parents at the first session of the 1996–97 school year.

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

Hueco's schoolwide program supports the majority of parent involvement efforts; additional costs are minimal. All workshops and activities are conducted by school staff or community representatives acting as volunteers. About $30 a month of Title I and general funds provide snacks, supplies, and incentives for parent workshops and activities. The Success for All program is also funded primarily through Title I funds. The Super Readers program receives donations from local businesses, PTO fundraising, and district general funds.

Hueco collaborates with community-based agencies and organizations to provide its parent involvement activities. Last year, representatives from two community organizations, Aliviane, Inc. and the Child Crisis Center, offered parenting education classes at the school site to Hueco parents at no cost. A child care worker from the local YMCA also volunteered her services last year to provide free child care during parent classes. Local businesses also donate resources, such as pizza parties by Peter Piper Pizza in El Paso, for the class with the most parent volunteer hours.

Evidence of Success

The principal reports that Hueco parents have become increasingly engaged in school activities. For example, the number of parents involved in at least one school-related activity increased from 30 percent in the 1994–95 school year to 80 percent during the 1996–97 school year. About 50 parents volunteer in the school each week; 25 to 30 of these parents volunteer daily. PTO attendance averages about 100 parents for each of the monthly meetings, with attendance sometimes as high as 800—more than one parent for every child enrolled in the school. During the 1995–96 school year, volunteers contributed a total of 6,320 hours to school activities.

Staff report that the breadth and quality of parent engagement have also improved since the program began. Early on, parents engaged primarily in fundraising activities and clerical work for teachers. Now, parents have a role in school matters through the Parent Communication Council, participate in classroom instruction, further their own education by enrolling in parenting workshops and adult education classes, and contribute to their children's education by promoting learning at home.

The principal and her assistant report that students benefit from the parent involvement program. They note an average attendance rate of 97 percent. They also believe that students whose parents come to parent workshops and activities experience more success in school and fewer disciplinary problems. Staff also believe that the parent involvement program, along with other recent school changes, contributes to the school's status as a Title I "recognized school" during the 1993–94 and 1994–95 school years, which is based on student scores on the TAAS. To be recognized, all Title I students in a school must score at or above the 70th percentile in all areas on the TAAS, including reading, writing, and math. This year the school barely missed being recognized; the fourth-grade students scored in the 69 percentile in math. Also, Hueco has been on the district's "top 10" list for parent involvement and parental programs for the last three years

Maine School Administration District #3:
A Geographically Dispersed, Rural District Draws Parents into Schools
Thorndike, Maine

Overview

The parent involvement programs in Maine's School Administration District (SAD) #3 focus on drawing parents into the schools, providing them and their children with interactive learning experiences, and involving parents as well as teachers in curricular and instructional planning. Thanks to the efforts of involved administrators, teachers, community members, and a special projects director who works in the district's central office, the district has won grants to supplement Title I funding and support training for teachers and parents in experiential learning and other ways to participate in their children's education. Through these activities, teachers have become more comfortable with bringing others into their classrooms, and many no longer believe that they alone are the "keepers of the knowledge." The district found that, once teachers accept the idea of having other adults in the classroom, they actively seek out parents.

Context

Geographic isolation is a significant barrier to developing parental involvement programs in this rural, primarily agricultural region of eastern Maine, which is known for its dairy products and blueberry farms. The district covers an area of 400 square miles and includes 11 small towns, of which Unity is the largest with a population of 11,000. There are six elementary schools, one junior high, and one high school. Some towns traditionally support strong parent-teacher organizations, but others, which are experiencing an influx of new residents from larger cities, struggle to develop a sense of community. There is also a small but growing migrant population that comes to the area during blueberry and apple picking seasons.

The student population is 99 percent white, and approximately 50 percent are eligible for free and reduced price lunches. All but two of the district's schools have implemented schoolwide programs.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

To improve home-school relations, the district and school staff try to address (1) the difficulties of parent involvement in a geographically dispersed, rural district, and (2) the perception held by many parents that older students do not require as much parent involvement in their education as younger students do. In addition, they wanted to address teachers' reluctance to involve parents in classroom and school activities. To promote student learning as a shared responsibility, the district has implemented outreach strategies aimed at relieving families' physical isolation from schools and bringing parents and staff together for reasons of information, training, and decision-making.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

In SAD #3, several communication strategies address barriers posed by the long distances between homes and schools and by the limited time that busy parents have for communicating with school staff.

High-tech home-school communications. By combining the resources provided through a series of grants (including a Nynex-Public Utilities Commission grant), the district created a hub site for telephones and computers at the high school. Unitel, a local telephone company, contributed materials to establish all schools as communications links so that parents can visit any school to contact the one their children attend.

This computer/telephone hub also receives support through a state-funded project called Waldo's Window, which improves communications between people in districts and isolated towns. Parents with home computers will be able to communicate with schools, and those without computers will be able to log in at school sites. In the 5 district towns that have no schools, parents will be able to log on at designated offices, which will serve as community computer access points.

Time and resources for working parents to focus on education. At parents' suggestion, district staff offer Potluck Nights as a way to encourage school-family communication between teachers and families despite their busy schedules. Originating at the junior high school as a way for older students, parents, and teachers to decide how best to meet students' educational needs, these casual dinners make it convenient for parents to attend evening meetings and events without interrupting dinner schedules, providing an informal setting for interaction among parents, teachers, and students. According to the district volunteer coordinator, these dinners foster the kind of informal communication that can be otherwise difficult to achieve. Teachers and parents are both encouraged to bring their families (child care is provided if needed), a strategy that has led to higher attendance rates.

Finding time for teachers. In addition, the district employs a home-school coordinator who, upon request, can support families and relieve some of the time demands placed on teachers by working with students who need extra support to succeed in school.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

The district reaches out to parents in several ways, including a quarterly newsletter that provides information about how families can help students with their homework and district-sponsored activities that offer family learning workshops. Some of these activities take place at a local conference center, and others take place at 1 or more of the district's eight schools. All of the district's workshops are offered to parents. Workshops have also been offered to parents and other community members who have been particularly interested in learning to browse the district's Web site by using the Waldo's Window community access computers.

Training that brings families and teachers together. The district sponsors community workshops at Camp Kieve, a leadership training institute that attracts teachers from throughout the Northeastern United States and Canada. Workshops have included:

- **Leadership Decisions Institute**, an annual week long retreat for all seventh-grade students that focuses on experiential learning activities designed to teach life skills and decision-making strategies. Parents and community members join teachers and administrators for a workshop on parenting skills where parents learn what their children are studying and what projects they will participate in at the camp. Last year more than 20 participants attended this workshop, and more than 200 parents attended an evening follow-up session.

- **Retreats for parents and teachers**, which focus on increasing community and parent involvement. The day-long retreats for parents feature discussions led by teachers and students. One recent retreat focused on conflict resolution and on solving communication problems between parents and adolescents. Attendance averages 20 to 30 participants.

Along with the Camp Kieve activities, the district sponsors other training that not only brings families and teachers together but also provides opportunities for learning at home:

- Community Day is an annual community-wide outreach and training effort. It seeks to bring families and community members together with teachers and school staff to participate in team-building activities, set educational goals, and devise strategies for accomplishing these goals. As a result of one recent Community Day, the town of Liberty initiated a plan to open a community library. Open to the general public, the Community Day activities are advertised through direct mailings, spots on a local cable station, newspaper advertisements, and local grassroots networking.

  This year, a local businessman, who owns the Moosehead-Belfast train line, has donated two train runs to the project. Up to 300 people can ride on each train run and participate in project activities. At stops along the trip, Camp Kieve trainers will lead community-building workshops on the train, and representatives of the Beacon Project (a Statewide Systemic Initiative effort supported by the National Science Foundation) will provide math and science workshops intended to develop community awareness about the state's new math and science framework and its performance standards, known as Learning Results.

- Individual schools hold an open house-spaghetti dinner, in which families and school staff share what children are learning with one another. For example, in the most recent open house, teachers and students performed skits and conducted lessons to teach community residents about the school's new peer mediation and conflict resolution program.

- The district designed a parent-student Internet workshop to introduce families and other community members to the Internet; about 25 community members were trained by students.

- One of the district's most popular professional development programs, entitled Critical Skills Education By Design, is available through Antioch College to teachers, administrators, parents and community members. More than 80 percent of the K–12 teachers and 100 percent of district administrators have attended one of these workshops, which are based on research indicating that students learn best in experiential, problem-based, collaborative environments and that they need to practice hands-on activities in both school and non-school settings, such as the home.

- Several schools in the district host Family Math/Science Nights. These workshops, modeled after the program developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, allow children and parents to explore interesting math or science activities, such as games that families can subsequently play at home. The program typically attracts 75 to 100 parents.

Volunteer preparation. For the past two years, a district volunteer coordinator has directed parent volunteer activities. As part of her job, she recruits volunteer coordinators for each school, and these individuals—typically parents—survey parents and teachers, distribute volunteer handbooks, and coordinate the yearly volunteer activities and schedules. To support individual school volunteer efforts, the district hosts an evening program for parents at the beginning of each year to inform them of volunteer activities available at each school. This also serves as an orientation workshop at each school—also at the beginning of each year—to teach parents how to become involved in their children's school and education. This year, the district volunteer coordinator plans to bring all of the coordinators together to compile a districtwide volunteer manual.

Finally, the coordinator organizes an annual teacher workshop entitled Building Effective Relationships with Volunteers to provide participants with ideas and skills for viewing parents as a resource.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Because many teachers in SAD #3 are accustomed to working independently, they find it difficult to open their classrooms and solicit input from parents. This reluctance on the part of teachers reinforces the traditional beliefs held by many parents; namely, that schools provide few opportunities for parents to get involved. Some of the above-mentioned workshops, which bring parents and teachers together, are breaking down these attitudinal barriers, and other efforts, such as including parents in district and school decision-making, are also building stronger school-family partnerships throughout the district.

Parents participate in decision-making at the district level and the individual school level. The district's special projects director encourages parents to help with school projects, seek funding, and offer their opinions on district activities. For example, parents at Unity Elementary worked with the special projects director and other school staff to rewrite and revamp report cards for students in grades 4–6.

Also, SAD #3 involves parents in the planning and implementation of Title I activities. The district invited parents from each school to participate in the year-long effort to write the plan for implementing Title I and other federal programs, which will include parents' feedback on developing new forms for reporting students' academic progress.

The district's five-year Title I plan also pledges to facilitate a community-oriented approach for educating children system wide. The plan promotes the philosophy that all elements of the community must work hand-in-hand to educate children and that these programs are most effective when they are based on a mutual consensus around common needs.

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

SAD #3 not only provides support for individual schools but also raises funds to support parent involvement activities. Some examples of the funding sources for the activities described above include:

- The Rural Leadership Initiative, a $500,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation, is a three-year grant that supports activities that build community spirit, cultivates community involvement, and enhances the potential for leadership among school staff and members of the community. This grant supports the experiential learning activities and the related parental involvement programs at Camp Kieve. A grant from the L.L. Bean Company through the Maine Development Foundation also contributes to these programs.

- A Noyce Grant (sponsored by local philanthropist Roberta Noyce) supports professional development activities that help teachers make the transition from lecture-based teaching to a more interactive, hands-on approach. Funding for Critical Skills Education workshops comes from the district through Noyce grants and National Science Foundation funds.

- Federal Reflective Practice Grants have funded activities in the district for years. Home-school coordinators, who are funded through federal dollars, work with students who need extra services.

- Maine's Statewide Systemic Initiative provides schools with Beacon grants (funded by the National Science Foundation) targeted at improving mathematics and science education, an arrangement that can include parent involvement activities. Monroe School, for example, used a Beacon grant for a garden building project that involved parents as well as teachers and students.

Evidence of Success

By first encouraging collaboration among parents and teachers and then by supporting events, such as potluck dinners, that provide teachers and parents with opportunities to interact more informally, the district has increased the number of teachers who encourage parental involvement. As the district's special projects director notes, although teachers previously had very little contact with parents, now many call parents and invite them into their classrooms.

> "I've seen a great shift in SAD #3 as teachers move from [the role of] keepers of the knowledge to the realization that it's okay to have other adults in their rooms and to access their knowledge. As the teachers' comfort levels increase, they open their doors and reduce their isolation and make parents feel welcome. Now teachers even call parents to encourage them to come into their classrooms."
>
> District special projects coordinator, Maine SAD #3

In addition, in her two years as the district volunteer coordinator for Maine's SAD #3, she has seen the number of active volunteer programs at district schools grow from two to all eight campuses. And although the district has only recently begun to track participation in school-sponsored events, some indicators show gains in attendance. For example, increasing numbers of parents and teachers have attended each successive potluck dinner. Although 60 parents attended the first dinner of 1995–96, and 40 stayed for a meeting on communication strategies, 75 parents attended the second dinner, with 42 attending a post-meeting on teacher-student needs and resources, and 95 parents attended the third potluck dinner, with 70 staying on for an adult-teen dialogue session facilitated by staff from Camp Kieve. Finally, all schools now have on-site volunteer coordinators who serve as liaisons to the district coordinator and are dedicated to helping meet the needs of teachers and families in their schools.

Parent Resource Center: A Racially Diverse, Urban District Stresses Information and Training for Parents
Stockton Unified School District
Stockton, California

Overview

To help parents become more engaged in the education of their children, the Stockton Unified School District's Parent Resource Center provides training and information on parent involvement to all parents in this high-poverty, racially diverse, urban district. The center offers training to parents on Title I program procedures and requirements, parents' rights and responsibilities under the program, and leadership strategies for effective program planning through school- and district-level Title I advisory councils. The center also provides workshops on parenting skills and home teaching techniques and operates a library of parenting and educational resources. Each school in the district designates a parent involvement contact who serves as a liaison with the Parent Resource Center and who recruits parents to participate in center activities. Since the center was established in 1990, an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 parents have participated in center workshops, seminars, and institutes.

Context

Located in the central portion of San Joaquin County, about 45 minutes south of the state capital of Sacramento, the Stockton Unified School District serves a student population of about 34,000 students in grades K–12 in 31 elementary schools, four middle schools, and seven high schools. In 1995, district enrollment was roughly 40 percent Hispanic, 29 percent Asian American/Pacific Islander, 17 percent white, 13 percent African American, and 2 percent Native American. About 35 percent of the district's student population is limited English proficient, and more than 50 percent of the students' families receive support from Aid to Families with Dependent Children. In the 1996–97 school year, all elementary schools in the district implemented schoolwide programs.

Six years ago, the Title I District Advisory Council decided parents needed a place where they would be welcomed and provided with educational resources. Because space was limited in most schools and many parents viewed the schools as unwelcoming, the council decided on a separate facility in a location convenient to all parents in the district. As a result, the district Office of State and Federal Programs (OSFP) established the Parent Resource Center in the fall of 1990. Open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and during scheduled weekend and evening events, the center is also available upon request for parent-initiated meetings and events.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

Staffed by a parent involvement specialist, a school-community relations advisor, a clerical support person, and for some events, curriculum specialists and outside consultants, the center is managed by the OSFP. The center also receives input from the Title I district advisory council and

from a group of parent volunteers who attend a weekend planning session each August to develop the parent training calendar for the coming year.

Center staff identified several challenges to increasing parent involvement in district schools, including time and resource constraints affecting both staff and parents as well as a lack of information and training relevant to parent involvement.

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Several features of the center's program address the time and resource constraints on staff and parents. These features include arranging for more staff time to communicate with families, providing transportation and child care for parents to attend workshops, and scheduling the times and locations of workshops to meet parents' needs. Additionally, the Parent Resource Center provides parents with some useful resources for helping their children make time for learning at home.

More staff time to communicate with families. The center originally relied on school principals to distribute information and materials about the center and recruit parents for training opportunities. Realizing that principals have too many other competing demands to fulfill this role, the center asked them to designate a parent involvement contact person for their school in late 1996. The contact person, who may be a teacher, secretary, teacher's aide, or other support personnel, serves as a liaison to the Parent Resource Center and shares information on center materials and activities. A monthly newsletter written by parent volunteers includes information on district policies, school events, and upcoming parent training opportunities.

Accommodating parent schedules, transportation, and child care needs. The center helps meet other parent needs by using a school bus to transport them to and from the center and providing babysitters to care for their children during the center's two-day-long Title I training seminar each year. Because many parents are hesitant to leave their neighborhoods for training and workshops, center staff also often conduct workshops at school sites. Additionally, most workshops are repeated at various times to accommodate parents' schedules.

Resources for learning at home. The center operates a library with materials to help parents assist their children's school achievement, including curriculum materials, instructional aids, and videotapes and books. Each month, parents learn hands-on teaching techniques in math and language arts through center workshops conducted by district curriculum specialists. At these workshops, parents can make and take educational materials, such as flash cards and board games, to help their children learn at home. About 15 to 20 parents attend these workshops each month.

Addressing safety concerns. The center's many programs and activities encourage parents to spend time at their children's school, and according to the principal of Webster Middle School, visible parent presence on campus and in the hallways results in a safer environment for learning and more inviting campuses for families to visit. Webster's principal attributes the school's high level of parent participation to the center's mentor parent program (described below), and credits an increased parent presence at the school with decreases in student behavior problems. During the 1995–96 school year, more than 100 parents volunteered almost 4000 hours at Webster and the number of conduct code violations decreased from 647 during 1994–95 to 349 during 1995–96, despite a 15 percent increase in student enrollment. This figure includes a decrease in fights (from 224 to 112); a

decrease in attacks or threats against students (from 180 to 110); a decrease in threats, injury, or attempted injury of school personnel or their property (from 26 to 4); and a decrease in possession of firearms (from 34 to 18). As a result of these improvements, the school principal reports that students feel safer in school and are more focused on learning.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

To provide parents with the information and skills they need, the center offers parents workshops on the Title I program's goals and objectives, parenting skills, and leadership skills. Training also targets the needs of school staff for information about effective parent involvement.

Training parents for educational decision-making. To ensure that all Title I parents are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities, the center offers full-day parent training seminars on Saturdays twice a year. About 100 to 150 parents attend each of these sessions, which inform parents about how to get involved in Title I program planning and evaluation. Recognizing that English is a second language for a sizeable portion of the district's families, center staff plan during the 1996–97 school year to provide additional training sessions on Title I for Hispanic and Southeast Asian parents in their native languages, using bilingual parents as presenters.

In addition, the center offers training in the fall of each year for parents who sit on the district- and school-level Title I advisory councils. The school-based councils, which are primarily composed of parents, develop and oversee schools' plans for the Title I program. In many schools, this council has merged with the school site council to provide leadership on all school management decisions. District-level policy on Title I is guided by the district council, a majority of whose members are parents. Center training for parents includes information on creating, implementing, and evaluating a school plan for Title I, understanding school budgets, and conducting successful meetings.

Parenting. The center offers an average of four to six parenting workshops each month. Topics include the relationship between child achievement and parent expectations; "protective parenting" skills (skills to reduce the probability of children engaging in unhealthy behaviors); refusal skills (learning to say no to children and not feel guilty); and anger management. Usually, about 20 to 25 parents participate in each parenting workshop. The center also handles the scheduling and logistics of literacy training for parents, which is provided by volunteer tutors at the school sites.

Training for volunteers. The center trains volunteers to become mentor parents, who train other parents and staff at the school and district levels. At intensive three-day institutes held at a nearby conference center, mentor parents learn the objectives and requirements of federal and state categorical programs, ways to help children learn, and skills for reaching out to parents and school staff to build a partnership between home and school. Each year, the four mentor parent institutes attract parents from across the district on a first-come, first-served basis. About 300 parents have participated in the institutes since they began in early 1993.

"What we're finding is that parents calling parents to the school is more effective than principals calling parents to the school."

Parent involvement specialist, Stockton Unified School District

Center staff have come to believe that parents are better at recruiting other parents than are school staff. Outreach efforts by the mentor parents have not only encouraged parents to become involved but also had a dramatic impact on at least one school. Two years ago Webster Middle School experienced gang-related problems. After a fight occurred between two gang members in the school one afternoon, rumors began to circulate of a big confrontation that would take place the next day. Concerned about gang warfare erupting at the school, the school principal called the center for help, and the staff in turn called a mentor parent at the school, who then called other parents and organized them for action. The next day 40 parents showed up at the school to help patrol the halls and school grounds. The principal asserts that this show of parental support, along with the parents' ongoing volunteer efforts, has led to the near elimination of gang-related activity at the school.

Training for school staff. At first, the center stressed extensive training for parents on becoming involved with the school and working with teachers, without providing equal support for teachers and other staff in the district. Consequently, school staff did not always welcome parents who wanted to become involved. Some teachers in fact felt threatened by parents who had received leadership training at the center, and these parents were labeled as troublemakers and discouraged from school involvement. To address this problem, mentor parents conducted workshops for school staff on obstacles to parent involvement in schools—such as parents' negative prior experiences with school, labeling, and bias based on a parent's socio-economic status, race, gender, physical appearance, or language ability—and strategies teachers can use to overcome them. All district principals participated in this workshop during the summer of 1995; the entire staff at three schools later participated in similar workshops, which are now continuing at other schools. During the 1995-96 school year, mentor parents spent 400 hours making presentations to teachers, administrators, and support staff. Because clerical staff are usually the parents' first contact with the school, the district also recently hired two consultants to provide a two-day workshop for clerical staff from across the district on a customer service approach to interacting with parents.

"The main barrier to effective parent involvement is changing teacher and parent attitudes ... because there is a sense of distrust and a lot of blaming.... We have to improve how we teach and how we parent, and to do that parents need to feel welcome at the school."

Parent involvement specialist, Stockton Unified School District

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

District policy reinforces the importance of parent involvement. In response to new Title I requirements, the district adopted a policy on parent involvement in May 1995, which states that the education of each child is the shared responsibility of the school, the family, and the community. It calls for the district to promote effective communication among families, schools, and the district; involve parents as leaders in school and district governance; support parents as volunteers in schools;

provide families with instruction on parenting skills to support their children's learning; and train staff to communicate effectively with parents. Also in response to Title I, the district has emphasized each school's responsibility to develop school-parent compacts, with the input of parents, teachers, and administrators. To assist schools in this effort, the center has provided all schools with sample compacts collected from schools in other districts.

The district has also implemented recognition efforts to help schools encourage parent involvement. Since 1985 the district has held an end-of-year volunteer recognition night to honor the two parents from each school who have volunteered the most hours. The 70–75 parents recognized at this event each year have volunteered more than 25,000 hours. As a means of encouraging schoolwide efforts to increase parent involvement, the center established a recognition program in 1995–96 for schools with high rates of parent involvement.

Evidence of Success

According to center staff, roughly 1,200 parents, teachers, and other community members take advantage of the services provided by the Parent Resource Center each year. Twenty to twenty-five parents participate in the workshops held by the center each month, and 100-150 parents participate in the Title I informational seminars held twice a year. In addition, more than 300 parents in the district have trained to become mentor parents, and several have taken leadership positions with the California Association of Compensatory Education and the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents. Center staff report that participation in seminars and workshops has increased substantially since the center was established in 1990.

The center collects information on volunteer hours of mentor parents; it found that last year parents who attended the Mentor Parent Institute spent almost 3,500 hours volunteering in their children's schools as teachers' assistants in classrooms, libraries, playgrounds, and cafeterias; 1,200 hours making presentations to other parents on parent involvement; and 400 hours providing parent involvement workshops to teachers, administrators, and support staff. In addition, many of these parents served as members of their school site and school advisory councils and as members of the district advisory council for Title I. Because they are charged with recruiting other parents to volunteer at their children's schools, mentor parents have also played a pivotal role in increasing schoolwide parent involvement in a number of schools.

The Parent Resource Center is currently developing plans for evaluating its programs, including the collection of baseline data on parent involvement in the district and determination of a method for evaluating the effectiveness of center programs in encouraging parent involvement in the schools. As part of this effort, all schools will be asked to keep records of parent volunteer hours beginning in the 1996–97 school year. Staff of the Parent Resource Center are also exploring ways to measure the effects of parent involvement on children's educational achievement. Center staff plan to develop a parent survey to determine what new training opportunities would be most useful to parents.

Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet: An Open-Door Policy for Inner-City Parents Kansas City Public Schools Kansas City, Missouri

Overview

A goal of Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School is to empower families and school staff by making them equally responsible for student learning. It is exemplified by the staff and principal's open door policy—parents are always encouraged to voice their opinion and participate in school activities. Each day, the Title I-funded parent-community liaison coordinates parent participation in activities such as the school's active tutoring program and provides family outreach and support services designed to draw parents into their children's educational lives. In January 1996, Phillips adopted the Accelerated Schools approach to learning that seeks to raise student achievement through a learning environment built around high expectations and substantial parent involvement. The principal, teachers, students, parents, and interested community members all participate in setting goals under this approach.

Students at Phillips concentrate not only on excelling academically but also on the arts. The school has music labs, a fully equipped dance studio, and an art studio; it also employs full-time staff members who specialize in each of these areas.

Context

Phillips, a schoolwide program, is located in the inner city within blocks of the historic section of Kansas City. Years ago much of the neighborhood housing was demolished to make room for a freeway, but today moderate and low-income housing units are being built as part of the revitalization of the local neighborhood. The neighborhood around the school is predominantly African American, and Phillips' student population of about 400 students in grades K-5 is 70 percent African American, 22 percent white, and 8 percent Hispanic. Most students are from moderate to low-income households located within ten miles of the school, 79 percent are eligible for free or reduced price lunches, and at least 33 percent come from single-parent families.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement

A major goal of Phillips' parent involvement efforts is to build trust between the school and parents, many of whom live in poverty. To do this, the school works to meet those family needs (such as transportation and child care) that will help draw parents into the school, offers information and training to support parent involvement, and actively solicits and implements parents' advice on school-related decisions.

"We will have a school that addresses the needs of all students. We recognize that to be successful in this endeavor we must include and involve all entities surrounding each child. Therefore, the major components of our plan will be: school, parents, and the community working together collaboratively to support the academic, emotional, and cultural development of our children."

Principal, Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

In a high-poverty school like Phillips, administrators recognize that family problems can be overwhelming at times–for both the individual family members and the school staff who work with them. Phillips ranks among its top priorities not only finding time for teachers to work with families but also meeting families' needs for transportation and child care. Simply getting parents into the school is often key to laying the foundation for a successful partnership.

Finding time for teachers. Using Title I funds, Wendell Phillips hired a full-time parent-community liaison in 1995. She helps organize all school-family events, allowing teachers and principals to devote more time to meeting with parents to discuss student learning and spend less time making logistical and administrative arrangements. The liaison keeps teachers informed about family needs, makes referrals for students with medical or behavioral needs, and helps teachers spread information on school-related issues to all parents. For example, last year the liaison led an orientation for parents on state and district policies on attendance, discipline, bussing, grading procedures, and educational goals and objectives. She also discussed parents' rights and responsibilities under the Title I program. In addition, the liaison visits parents at home—often in the evening or on weekends—or at work, or calls them if their children are having problems or not attending school. Each week, she averages about ten home visits.

Helping families find the time and other resources to support their children's education. The liaison schedules all school meetings at times when parents can conveniently attend. Given that this magnet school draws students from different parts of the city, the liaison finds parents' transportation to be essential to parent attendance. She arranges carpools, picks up parents, and occasionally sends a taxi for parents who need transportation. Also, she ensures that babysitting is available for those parents who are unable to attend unless they bring their small children. This year the school plans to serve food at meetings and activities to attract those parents who might come straight from work.

The liaison also responds to staff concerns that some students have personal needs that interfere with their overall academic progress. For instance, in 1995–96 the faculty noted that some students needed haircuts, so the school brought in a barber who gave 15 haircuts to students each month. This year, the school arranged for parents who work as barbers to visit the school every Monday to give haircuts to students who need them. The liaison said that improving students' self-image can often lead to improvement in their self-confidence and ability to concentrate on schoolwork. School staff also arranged to provide warm clothing, eyeglasses, and dental work for students in need.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

Through workshops and outreach activities, the parents of children attending Wendell Phillips can learn skills and strategies to form a meaningful home-school partnership.

Training parents to support children's academic progress. Phillips provides training to teach parents and other caregivers to support children's academic progress. For example, Wendell Phillips pays for parents to attend a two-day regional conference sponsored by the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 parents that focuses on making parents more aware of the issues concerning their child's education. Topics covered include strategies to assist students with reading at home, standards and assessments, effective discipline, and understanding the Title I program. At least five parents and three staff members from Wendell Phillips attended in spring 1997; they will report what they learned to other parents in late April.

Additionally, in spring 1997 Wendell Phillips invited parents to attend two strategy sessions to generate ideas for information and training to improve the school climate. One session specifically targets parent involvement activities, and participants planned the following parent workshops for the 1997–98 school year:

- A Trash Can Learning make-and-take workshop will teach parents to use common household items as educational tools. Old socks and buttons can be used to make puppets for storytelling, which can improve children's reading comprehension skills.
- A Saturday workshop will provide training on how to use computers and how to determine which educational software is appropriate for children at any given age.
- Another workshop, entitled Man-to-Man, will focus on involving male authority figures in students' lives. And because an increasing number of students live with grandparents, Phillips will sponsor a one-day event called With Love to Grandparents, a day when they are invited to visit the classroom and discuss the way things were when they were at school.

Other workshops for parents have included:

- improving reading skills through storytelling;
- self-esteem training;
- how to talk so children will listen and how to listen so children will talk;
- strategies to teach children to read;
- child behavior and discipline; and
- hygiene for children (a seminar for parents and children taught by a nurse and teachers who provide attendees with hygiene kits).

Generally, about 35 to 50 parents attend these workshops, which are held in the morning or evening to accommodate their work schedules. In addition to workshops, Phillips sometimes offers lengthier parent courses. For example, during 1995–96 approximately 50 parents from Phillips and other area schools attended a six-week course for parents called Love and Logic, in which a local psychologist taught parenting skills. And in fall 1997 a parent who is a computer programmer will offer a computing course.

Training parents to participate in decision-making. Phillips actively involves parents in the planning, implementation, and review of the schoolwide program. After determining the times when most parents can attend (Saturday, Sunday, and evening meetings are not uncommon), the regular site-based management School Advisory Council (SAC) meetings typically attract 50 to 100 parents each month. SAC meetings incorporate Title I issues and training, such as an overview and history of the Title I program, a review of program services and eligibility, and discussion of the Phillips schoolwide program plan for the upcoming year.

> "It is crucial that parents are part of planning, even though they are having a hard time understanding that the school wants them to be part of the decision-making process."
>
> Parent/community liaison, Phillips Magnet

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Through the newly adopted Accelerated Schools approach, the schoolwide program, and the site-based management SAC, parents and teachers play new and expanded roles in school restructuring. They regularly make decisions about curriculum and instruction, parent involvement, and strategies for using resources to maximize student progress.

Parents as partners in schoolwide restructuring. In the hopes of enriching the learning process for disadvantaged students, Phillips adopted the Accelerated Schools approach in January 1996. The model, designed by Henry Levin at Stanford University, is guided by three overarching principles: unity of purpose, empowerment, and building on strengths. Accelerated Schools strive to create a learning environment distinguished by high expectations for students, high status for teachers, and substantial involvement by parents. The model is based on the premise that a school's fundamental purpose is to ensure that every student achieves at least at grade level by the time he or she leaves the school.

The model calls for each school to tailor other goals by engaging the principal, teachers, students, parents, and interested community members in serious reflection and debate. By joining not only cadres that are formed to deal with specific problems but also steering committees that oversee all school activities, administrators, teachers, and especially parents play a key role in determining curriculum and instruction. For example, Phillips parents recently voiced a desire for higher science standards, and asked for a greater emphasis on biology at an earlier age. In addition, eight parents and faculty members to date have been trained as coaches, who encourage all school staff, including janitors and bus drivers, to participate in determining what goals the school should strive to accomplish. Coaches also train school staff to evaluate the school program.

Parents and teachers collaborate to plan the schoolwide program, including how to spend the parent involvement program budget (about $2,500). Last year, approximately 25 parents attended, brainstormed, and voted at each of two meetings of the parent budget planning meetings; they decided to use some of these funds to present the six-week course on Love and Logic. This year the parent-community liaison hopes they will support the use of a portion of Title I funds for a family night dedicated to improving students' reading skills.

Also, during the 1995-96 school year, parents, teachers, and the principal developed a home-school compact in response to the new Title I requirement. It consists of three separate pledges that participants sign:

- Parents pledge to cooperate with teachers, read and respond to school communications, and provide their children with opportunities for enrichment activities, among other things. All parents whose children attend Phillips have signed the compact.

- Teachers pledge to maintain high expectations, communicate clearly with their students, and provide regular and detailed progress reports.

- Students pledge to work hard, attend school regularly, and turn in homework. Students are required to sign the compact, a copy of which is included in their portfolio.

Parents and teachers also collaborate to make decisions through the SAC. For example, during 1996, parents requested that the SAC address the timing of student report cards. Many parents said they wanted to know about student progress earlier in order to intervene if necessary. Brainstorming sessions led parents and teachers to agree that a new academic progress form would be sent home every two weeks; the form indicates assignments completed, assignments not completed, and the quality of student work. This form ensures that parents are kept abreast of their children's academic performance between report cards and thus know what to expect when the cumulative quarterly grades come home.

Building parent involvement around family needs. The liaison solicits input from parents on school programs through surveys (conducted twice a year) and through the informal polling of parents who attend school functions. Other informal discussions—held as parents drop off and pick up students in front of the school—also help the liaison learn of parents' needs. With this information she can determine the demand for services such as transportation and babysitting and tailor workshops and programs to address parents' concerns.

New uses of school space. Wendell Phillips operates a parent resource area located in the administration office, where parents can check out educational kits and videos, how-to materials, books, tapes, and more to give them the skills and resources to help their children with both schoolwork and homework. For example, parents can check out videos and tapes on topics such as phonics and parenting skills as well as reading, math, and writing textbooks. The area is open all day, and an average of 10 to 15 parents visit daily. Further, parents can use the school's computer lab (when students are not using it) for their own personal use or to help their children with homework or schoolwork.

Encouraging parental participation; the Wendell Phillips 3000 Gold Club. The school offers incentives to encourage parents to participate in school events, such as tutoring or serving as chaperons for field trips. Parents earn points for attending school programs and SAC or committee meetings, accompanying classes on field trips, tutoring children at school, and supervising class parties. They can also earn points for completing home learning activities, such as reading with their child, taking them to the library, or helping teachers with forms for progress reports or census cards. The school honors parents who earn points at an awards banquet/ceremony held in June, and parents earn prizes donated by local businesses.

Evidence of Success

The principal and liaison report that parent involvement activities, both academically oriented events and those involving parents in school decision-making, are well attended. For example:

- One hundred fifty parents attended parent-teacher conferences during the 1995–96 school year; because many parents have more than one child enrolled at the school, this represents a high proportion of the school's parents.
- One hundred fifty parents attended a back-to-school-Title I conference held in August 1996.
- SAC meetings draw 12 to 70 parents, averaging about 30.
- Workshops regularly draw 25 to 70 participants.

In addition, the liaison reports that, as a result of her efforts and those of the principal and a core of involved parents, parents at the school have become increasingly aware of the schoolwide program requirements, including the expectation that they will take an active part in their children's education. In support of this, a parent commented about the September orientation meeting, "It's so good to start a year when you feel like everyone is working together!"

Roosevelt High School
(The Alliance Schools Initiative):
An Inner-City High School Joins a Statewide Effort
Dallas, Texas

Overview

The Alliance Schools Initiative is working to develop strong community-based constituencies of parents, teachers, and community leaders as a strategy for substantially increasing student achievement in low-income areas throughout Texas. Beginning in 1992 in 32 schools, the initiative is a partnership between the Texas Interfaith Education Fund (TIEF), whose separate chapters statewide include the Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI), the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (TIAF) Network, and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Many Alliance schools enroll large proportions of students from minority families living in low-income communities. Severe student discipline problems, disunity among school staff, and little or no parent involvement are characteristic of many of these schools. The initiative focuses on restructuring the relationship among stakeholders in school communities, including parents, teachers, school administrators, students, community and business leaders, and public officials, in order to increase student learning and student performance overall. Below we highlight how one school, Franklin Roosevelt High School in the Dallas Independent School District, is implementing the Alliance approach.

Context

At Roosevelt High, 99 percent of the students are from minority families. The principal estimates that about 80 percent of students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. In 1992, fewer than one-quarter of Roosevelt students met minimum academic standards on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). TEA included Roosevelt on its list of low performing schools, and the Dallas Independent School District was considering whether to close the school. Student discipline at Roosevelt was often a problem. In addition, in 1993 a student shot and killed another student in one of the school's hallways.

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools

The decision to become an Alliance school led Roosevelt to address several barriers to parent involvement that are common in poor inner-city areas, as well as other barriers that commonly inhibit the educational involvement of parents of high school students. School-related barriers at Roosevelt included the teaching staff's lack of skills and resources for reaching out to parents of older students and their lack of vision in not expecting parents to be more active participants in their children's education. As one teacher said, "The few parents who came to PTA meetings just sat there. We didn't ask or expect them to do anything meaningful, and so they didn't try...." And many parents felt the same way, viewing their children's education as the school's responsibility rather than as a joint school-family venture.

According to interviews with school staff and parents, other family- and community-related barriers included: the rapid social and economic decay of the surrounding community; a high proportion of single parents who work long hours or two jobs, making it difficult to spend time with their children or visit the school; and a sizeable number of parents who failed to participate because of their own negative school experiences.

> "There is no one way to improve parent involvement with the schools...you need to find *many* ways to make a school inviting to parents, because there are many different needs and personalities out there...."
>
> Principal, Roosevelt High School

Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

Resources for supporting school outreach to families. Many parents of Roosevelt students work one or two jobs and have trouble finding the additional time and energy it takes to stay involved in their children's school life. When Roosevelt's principal discovered that the only Roosevelt parents responding to surveys or attending PTA meetings were those of high achievers, he decided to reach out to more parents. He started by ensuring that every parent saw their child's report card. "At the high school level, if you send a bad report home with the student, it probably won't get to the parents," he said. So during his first year at the school, a group that included teachers, parents, the principal, and some other community members hand-delivered a report card to every Roosevelt student's home who had one or more failing grades. Also, the principal now requires teachers to document that they have consulted with the student's parents and discussed an appropriate course of action before taking any significant step (e.g., failing a student, placing him/her on academic probation). According to the principal and staff, reaching out to parents of students in the upper grades requires a personal touch. "In troubled communities where poverty reigns, sending home fliers will not draw parents to the school; telephone calls and home visits show folks you're serious about the home-school relationship."

Finding time for teachers. In addition, during 1995–96, its first year as a schoolwide program, Roosevelt hired a parent liaison who not only calls parents and notifies them of school, school board, and city council meetings, but also discusses their children's academic and disciplinary standing. Averaging 30 to 60 calls a day, the liaison helps teachers find the time to keep parents informed and involved.

Addressing safety concerns. Roosevelt parents play an important role in ensuring that the school is perceived as a safe place for other parents to gather. As one parent said, it may be a lack of parent presence in schools that contributes to gang violence or other threats to personal safety. To help address this problem, parents at Roosevelt have on occasion organized informal security patrols to monitor the campus.

Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

The principal of Roosevelt recognized that his teaching staff needed to use a variety of strategies for reaching out to all of the school's families. After traveling to Austin and seeing an Alliance school in action, the principal decided to forge a partnership with IAF and DAI. The Alliance Schools Initiative began operation at Roosevelt in 1992. A major thrust of the initiative is to implement strategic, targeted training for teachers and administrators and to provide services, education, and training for parents and community leaders as they participate in school reform efforts.

The intensity and duration of the Alliance training vary considerably depending on the needs of a particular school. Typically, the training involves one-hour training sessions for 15 to 50 people at least once a week and often twice a week. Developing an organized, action-oriented group of leaders, however, may sometimes take longer.

Training decision makers to collaborate. DAI conducts training sessions to teach principals how to form "core teams," consisting of the principal, teachers, staff, parents, and other community/business leaders. The core teams receive training in conducting house meetings where parents, school staff, and community members share their concerns and develop an action agenda for the school.

DAI also trains school staff to conduct a Neighborhood Walk for Success as a vehicle for visiting parents and residents of the co mmunity surrounding the school. DAI then guides the school staff through a process to help them assess conditions at the campus and surrounding community, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of both. According to one DAI organizer, the most essential component of parent involvement is ongoing training. At Roosevelt, school leaders expect students during the upcoming year to form a core team and participate in the core team training.

Parent training to support learning at home. As part of this ongoing training, Roosevelt parents can participate in classes on topics such as helping their children with homework. According to the principal, this training is especially useful for parents whose past school experiences have been negative, or who did not progress very far in school themselves. For example, during the fall of 1995, parents of all sophomores and seniors who had not yet passed the TAAS were invited to an evening class on how the TAAS affects their children's academic future. The class included small-group lessons on TAAS reading and math skills as well as sample test items. School staff hoped that providing parents with information about what their children should be learning could lead to more opportunities for students to spend time at home with their parents developing and honing these skills through, for example, discussions of their homework.

> "...Many parents lack academic skills themselves, so when they get inside the school, we make them feel very disadvantaged...It's hard to get parents to come to the school to meet with teachers or the principal, open up, and take the personal risk of saying 'I don't know what you're talking about....'"
>
> Teacher, Roosevelt High

Training parents to help themselves as well as their children. Also during school year 1995–6, a core group of teachers developed three-hour, twice-weekly classes for parents, based on needs identified during the Neighborhood Walk for Success. These free sessions focused on adult literacy, computer literacy, English as a Second Language, and parenting skills.

One teacher involved in providing parent training plans to implement more parenting skills courses in the future. For example, family members of high school students need training that shows how parents can help their children develop study skills and complete applications for college or for vocational training. Current plans include having parents of high achieving Roosevelt students enrolled in advanced placement courses help train other parents to complete the steps needed to get their children into college, including taking college admissions tests on time, completing all applications on time, and collecting the necessary written references.

Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Becoming an Alliance school means that school staff, parents, and other community members are learning about education reform and the organizational arrangements that are essential for them to hold the district and state accountable for facilitating student achievement. The initiative formalizes the relationships and commitments among stakeholders, each of whom agrees to work with TIEF and TIAF to improve the quality and performance of a school. TEA provides flexibility, such as waivers from state guidelines, to schools willing to redesign and reform their entire educational program.

The process of becoming an Alliance school begins with identifying leaders and key concerns of parents and staff. At Roosevelt, the neighborhood walk was followed by individual and small group meetings that included the DAI organizer, the principal, teachers, parents, and community members. From these small group meetings, the DAI organizer and principal identified four "core teams" of teachers, parents, community members, and, in the upcoming year, students, all of whom meet regularly to discuss the issues needing attention. As one Alliance school organizer said, "The most challenging aspect of getting parents involved is to help them understand that they don't always need to be at school for a particular problem, but they can also be part of a constituency that develops a broad-based plan to improve the school."

Core team members work closely with the community to assess family needs and strengths and to develop an action agenda for the school. They have played active roles in areas such as curriculum reform. For example, parents recently helped secure a waiver from TEA to implement block scheduling, a plan they anticipated would improve both student attendance and achievement. Also, core team members worked to ensure that the school staff worked with Roosevelt's feeder schools to help them understand the value of meaningful parent involvement. Roosevelt uses its Investment Capital Fund grant from TEA to organize "vertical alignments" with its feeder schools, so that students coming to Roosevelt have strengthened academic skills and the support of their parents and families.

Roosevelt implemented a schoolwide program during the 1995–96 school year, and since that time has developed a school-parent compact that parents, teachers, and students sign annually. The compact emphasizes communication among the parties through conferences as well as parents visiting classrooms. The compact charges the school with providing (1) homework assignments to enhance what students learn in the classroom and (2) ample opportunities for parents to participate in decisions

affecting their children's education. The compact also charges the school with providing parents with other opportunities for decision-making through surveys, questionnaires, and meetings. The compact further requires the school to provide parents with flexible scheduling of parent meetings, assemblies, training sessions, and school functions to maximize parent involvement.

Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships

Most Alliance schools receive competitive grants through the TEA Investment Capital Fund to support their restructuring and reform efforts. The state legislature allocated $5 million over 1995–1997, and 45 Alliance schools won awards in the first round of grants. Other Alliance schools are now eligible to apply for the second round of grants of up to $20,000 per school for promoting staff and parent development and for implementing strategies to increase student achievement.

Because Roosevelt is a schoolwide program, Title I funds help support parent involvement activities. TEA's initial Investment Capital Fund grant to Roosevelt High School was for $15,000. The school has also been awarded $59,000 from the school district for raising attendance by more than 11 percent. Additionally, Roosevelt recently received a $6,000 grant from the Pepsi-Cola Company.

Evidence of Success

Recent achievement gains at Roosevelt resulted in the school being removed from TEA's list of low-performers. TAAS scores have increased substantially. Between 1992–93 and 1995–96, Roosevelt students rose from the 40th percentile to the 81st percentile in reading. During this same period, Roosevelt students rose from the 16th percentile to the 70th percentile in mathematics and from the 58th to the 80th percentile in writing. In addition, attendance at Roosevelt jumped more than 11 percent between 1992–92 and 1994–95—the largest increase in the district during this period.

At Roosevelt High, parent and community involvement with the school has also increased substantially. Some examples include:

- On a weekly basis, 40 parents regularly participate in the four adult education classes. In 1994, about ten parents attended the first PTA meeting; more than 200 attended the first meeting of 1996.
- In the fall of 1996, roughly 80 percent of parents of sophomores and seniors who had not yet passed the TAAS attended TAAS training classes.
- More than 100 parents, teachers, school administrators, and other community members participate in the annual neighborhood walks, which reach more than 100 households in the community.
- Several parents recently served as precinct captains in local, state, and national elections, a development that in turn resulted in the largest voter turnout in the history of the precinct.

In addition, parents indicated in focus group interviews that discipline problems have decreased. As one parent noted, "[children] know that even if their [own] parents are not there, there are parents there that care about them and will correct them."

Appendix B

Descriptions of 20 Successful Local Approaches

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Alamo Navajo Community School **Bureau of Indian Affairs** **Magaleno, NM** **(Rural)**	• School addresses distance and language barriers by broadcasting programs in Navajo from a local AM radio station operated by the reservation's school board. • Parents and Teachers as Partners program features a meal that teachers and parents share and workshops on language and math skills development, reading, cooking with children, and other topics. • Parent advisory committee provides an open forum for parents to voice their concerns and recommendations for the school; attendance ranges from 5 to 25 parents. • Monthly parent meetings and open houses are often combined with community events (e.g., basketball games) to attract more parents. • Bilingual home-school liaisons have visited over 75 percent of parents and students at home at least once to personalize school communications; they make an average of 25 visits each month. • All staff members use release time to visit students and parents at home; teachers visit an average of eight homes each month. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, Johnson O'Malley, G&T Dropout Demonstration, Indian Health Services, Title IX Evidence of Success: • Forty to 50 percent of parents participate in at least one activity during the school year, an increase of about 15 percent over the last five years. • In 1995-96, parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences jumped from none to over 20 percent. • Principal reports parents spend more time at school events and participating rather than passively attending and listening (e.g., more parents involved in hands-on activities such as the Parents and Teachers as Partners workshops).	K-12 350	100% Navajo	98% FRL (free or reduced-price lunch) Schoolwide Program

[1] All schools and districts included in this Idea Book receive Title I funding. This column indicates whether a school has implemented a schoolwide program.

[2] Administrators in many schools cannot separate the costs of parent involvement efforts from other reforms and activities. This is especially true in schools that have implemented schoolwide programs (as have most schools in this appendix). However, administrators reported that, in addition to their school or district general operating budget, the funding sources listed here provide a major source of support for their parent involvement efforts.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Atenville Elementary School **Lincoln County Public Schools** **Harts, WV** **(Rural)**	• Action Research Team of parents and professionals guides, evaluates, and modifies collaborative efforts using relevant research. They receive training two to three times per year and share their training with other parents and teachers on two or three staff development days. • Home-visitor program targets hard-to-reach families, obtains information about families' needs and interests, and collects parent input on school issues. Parent coordinator and Telephone Tree volunteer visit approximately 20 families each year. • Telephone Tree parent representative contacts 20–25 parents every month to discuss school issues and give parents an opportunity to voice their concerns. • Parent workshops take place seven times each year and address topics such as language development among young children, how to help with homework, and children's mathematics learning • Each day, 8–10 parent volunteers, approximately 100 each year, serve on school committees, read with students at lunch breaks, run an after-school tutoring program, attend staff development sessions, make site visits to other schools, and attend Board of Education meetings. • Centrally located family center makes parents feel invited and included. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, Benedum Foundation in Pittsburgh, Institute for Responsive Education in Boston, state grants, Goals 2000, local business partners • Southern West Virginia Community College co-sponsors free for-credit courses for parents and pays Atenville instructors to teach them. Evidence of Success: • From 1991–92 to 1995–96, the number of parent volunteer hours rose from 2,000 to 7,000. • In 1995–96, 100 parents, representing almost half of the families at the school, participated in the annual volunteer training; 8–10 parents volunteer at the school each day. • Number of students participating in after-school tutoring program increased from 21 in the first year to 62 in the third year of the program. • From 1991–92 to 1995–96, CTBS scores for the third grade rose from the 59th to the 71st percentile; sixth grade scores rose from the 58th to 63rd percentile. • In 1996, Atenville parents successfully lobbied the Board of Education to keep the school's K–6 configuration.	Pre-K–6 213	100% white	83% FRL Schoolwide Program

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Buffalo Public Schools Parent center **Buffalo Public Schools** **Buffalo, NY** **(Urban)**	• Personal improvement services include seminars and classes on parenting skills, literacy, education, sewing, art, computer literacy, ESL; more than 100 parents attend. • An average of 45 students and parents each week attend computer classes for families after school; bus brings entire family to center and provides child care if necessary so parents and children can participate together in individualized tutoring and instruction. • Center features two computer labs with 90 computer workstations. • Families who cannot visit center can also borrow one of 140 computers in the center's take-home computer program for 5–6 weeks; parents attend orientation on how to install and operate computers. • After-school tutoring program provides parents and children with individualized homework tutoring. • Child care services available. • Title I parents receive priority enrollment. Funding Sources[2]: Title I, Even Start, partnerships with several local organizations Evidence of Success: • Excluding take-home computer program and field trips, the parent center serves about 250 families each semester. • All center activities serve about 3,000 parents each year. • On a survey of the 1994–95 Take Home Computer Program, 44 percent of parents reported that the program had a "significant" effect on their child's motivation toward learning; 52 percent reported that it had some effect. All parents reported noticeable or significant improvements in their children's math and reading skills.	Birth–12 48,000	53% African American 34% white 10% Hispanic 3% American Indian, Asian	59% FRL
Buhrer Elementary School **Cleveland Public Schools** **Cleveland, OH** **(Urban)**	• Surveyed parents expressed interest in helping children better prepare for state-mandated proficiency exams and in developing a GED program for parents. • Collaboration with Baldwin-Wallace College provides parents with classes in parent-child communication. • Family math offered to families twice a year in English and Spanish; 35 parents attended in 1996. • All home-school communications are provided in English, Spanish, and Arabic. • School psychologists work regularly with parents on topics that include homework-helping skills and school attendance issues. • Block Parents program provides activities for parents who live far from school; staff go to a nearby library or a parent volunteer's home to address various parent concerns and share school-related information. A typical meeting attracts 18–20 parents. Funding Sources[2]: Title I, foundation grant, university partnership Evidence of Success: • Principal reports a continuing increase in the number of Block Parents attending school functions since the program began. • Approximately 300 parents participated in Parent/Family Day and visited classrooms and met teachers. • Two hundred parents attended teacher conferences in 1995–96.	Pre-K–5 450	50% Hispanic 40% African American 5% white	95% FRL Schoolwide Program

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Cane Run Elementary School **Jefferson County Public Schools** **Louisville, KY** **(Urban)**	• Five Family Technology Nights each year provide hands-on, technology-supported learning activities for parents and their children, increase parents' awareness of available technology, and offer training to parents and community adults in basic computer skills. Approximately 20–40 parents and children attend each night. • School maintains 30 laptop computers for students and parents to borrow overnight or on weekends. • More than 20 families are involved in the Even Start Program; parents study for the GED or take parenting classes while children are in school or the on-site nursery. • Family Resource Center links families with mental health counseling, medical services, social services, and other community resources. • Family Resource Center runs a summer sports program and an affordable after-school tutoring and recreation program for children; approximately 4 parents volunteer each day. • As many as 8 parents accompany teachers on a retreat to participate in meetings on curriculum, planning, student assessment, and other educational issues. Funding Sources[2]: Title I, Kentucky Education Reform Act funds, Goals 2000, local grant, and corporate donations Evidence of Success: • Since 1990, membership in the PTA has grown from 60 to 700. Most of the families at the school now belong to the PTA. The PTA has won more than 30 awards for exemplary attendance, including the state PTA's highest award for a local unit, the Overall Advocate for the Child award. • The number of parents who visit the school building daily has increased from 3–4 parents to 30 parents per day. • During the last two years, discipline referrals have declined 30 percent each year. • Attendance has remained steady at about 94 percent over the last few years. • The school has seen modest but steady gains in test scores over the past four years.	K–5 450	50% African American 50% white	80% FRL Schoolwide Program
The Family Resource Center at Charter Oak School **West Hartford School District** **West Hartford, CT** **(Urban)**	• School-linked system of family support and services helps involve families in the educational process (e.g., services such as child care and community referrals help families to become involved in their children's education). • School showcased as a School of the 21st Century demonstration site for the Yale/Bush Center at Yale University. • An array of adult education classes is provided including ESL, with the mission of teaching parents the language skills they need to help children with schoolwork and homework. • Principal visits ESL classes to talk with parents. • Teachers visit the home of each entering kindergarten student to include families in children's educational experience from the start. • Parents and teachers run after-school programs, which range from computing to juggling. Funding Sources[2]: $242,000 Kellogg Foundation grant, $40,000 from the state department of education Evidence of Success: • Approximately 30–35 parents of school-age children visit the family resource center each week. • The school is evaluating the effects of center activities on student achievement; however, data will probably not be available for at least 2 years.	K–5 300	52% white 23% Hispanic 16% African American 10% Asian	34% FRL (est.)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Rodney B. Cox Elementary School **Pasco County Public Schools** **Dade City, FL** **(Urban)**	• Monthly parent workshops conducted by school staff focus on parenting skills and parents' ability to help with schoolwork and homework. • As a full-service school, Cox offers dental care, counseling, and health care to students and their families. • A parent involvement teacher, two migrant home-school coordinators, and one minority recruiter conduct home visits that include training in parenting skills. • Parents receive transportation to meetings and other school activities. • Local adult education program offers classes twice a week at the school. • School "open door" policy ensures that teachers can meet with parents whenever they come to the school. Funding Sources[2]: Title I, $200,000 PECO grant with matching funds from district, Florida First Start grant, federal migrant education funds, state and federal Head Start funding, Exceptional Student Education funding, support/donations from several businesses and organizations Evidence of Success: • During 1995-96, 74 parents registered as volunteers; 10-20 parents volunteer at the school each day. • Up to 200 parents participate in workshops each month. • Parents tell the principal they are now more comfortable at the school. • Test scores have increased over the past two years. For example, in 1994-95, 31 percent of students scored above the 50th percentile in math and 14 percent in reading. In 1995-96, 61 percent of the students scored above the 50th percentile in math and 34 percent in reading.	pre-K-5 512	44% Hispanic 40% African American 16% white	93% FRL Schoolwide Program
DeForest School District **Public Library Team** **DeForest, WI** **(Small town)**	• School district and local public library jointly sponsor a family involvement and literacy program; both commit full-time staff to the effort. • The public library (the local Even Start site) provides early education, parenting education, and adult education on-site; retention rate is 79 percent. • Program produces and distributes self-contained family activity kits each week to all Title I families, all families who participate in the library's story time, and all Even Start families (350 total); parents sign a contract pledging to carry out the activities with their children. • Library circulates copies of district curriculum and objectives; it maintains videotapes of school events such as plays and talent shows for parents to check out if they cannot attend. • Program provides series of Family Learning Nights-9-12 workshops per school year for families of students in grades pre-K-12. • Program offers workshops for middle and high school students and parents on such topics as career exploration. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, community donations Evidence of Success: • Family learning nights held at the library average about 100 adult participants and many students. Previously, similar events held at the school had very poor or no attendance. • Regular program participation in Even Start and Family Involvement and Literacy programs has increased by at least 25 percent over the last 3 years. • Every child in the district now has a public library card. • Student attendance increased from 95 percent in 1993-94 to 97 percent in 1995-96.	pre-K-12 3,000	96% white 4% Middle Eastern, Hispanic	14% FRL

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Ferguson Elementary School **School District of Philadelphia** **Philadelphia, PA** **(Urban)**	• Parents Make a Difference Conference provides a two-day open house where parents see children reading and participating in hands-on math activities; principal, teachers, and children travel door-to-door on a Sunday to invite the community. • Teacher-directed community workshops are held up to six Saturdays a year to focus on needs of students in different grade levels; 100-150 parents attended the two workshops offered at the end of the 1995-96 school year. • Community assistants program provides training and stipends to parents to serve as classroom aides. • Parent Network meets to review school and community calendars and to get word out to parents about events. • Approximately six parents a day visit the parenting center, which houses computers and lending library. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, partnership with Temple University Evidence of Success: • The 1995-96 fall open house drew 350 parents, compared with 30 parents in 1989. • Fifty parents volunteer as classroom aides each week. • From 1993 to 1996, the percentage of first-graders reading on grade level increased from 5 to 37 percent. • From 1993 to 1996, the number of disciplinary referrals dropped from 586 to 267. • Average daily attendance increased from 80 percent to 90 percent during the same period. • Twenty-five parents received certificates of continuing education from Temple University in 1995-96.	pre-K-5 750	75% African American 25% Hispanic	98% AFDC Schoolwide Program
Family School Partners in Education **Greensville County Public Schools** **Emporia, VA** **(Rural)**	• Mobile Parent Resource Center targets parents of Title I students and travels to four sites each day, serving 12-18 parents at a time; parents are trained as tutors to work with their children. • Six area businesses allow the Mobile Parent Resource Center to visit work sites so that employee parents can participate before or after school or during break. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Parent visits to the center doubled from 1991 to 1992; approximately 420 parents have visited each year since 1992. • An average of 75 parents have been trained each year since June 1992. • Although the test scores of children whose parents visit the center are not specifically tracked, Title I students countywide have shown growth on the ITBS pre- and post-tests in reading since 1991-92 (e.g., third grade scores increased 8 percentage points in 1991-92 from the pre-test to post-test and fifth grade scores increased 12 percentage points in 1993-94).	K-12 2,764	67% African American 33% white	56% FRL

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Hueco Elementary School **Socorro Independent School District** **El Paso, TX** **(Rural)**	• Parent workshops and courses address general parenting skills, including effective nurturing, child development, drug abuse prevention, and health and physical well-being. The number of parents who attend ranges from eight to 30. • Classes in citizenship, ESL, GED, and computer skills support parents' own educational and personal goals. Two years ago, 20 parents became U.S. citizens through the citizenship course. • All Hueco families participate in the Super Readers program, which provides incentives for parents to read with their children. • Family Math nights introduce parents to school curriculum. Participation increased from 30 parents at the first session in 1995–96 to 80 in 1996–97. • All home-school communications and parent workshops and activities are conducted in both English and Spanish. • Twenty to 30 parents attend the monthly Parent Communication Council which allows them to share their concerns about the school with the principal and vice principal. • Teachers receive release time to conduct home visits. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, Bilingual Education, private donations, state aid, PTO fundraising Evidence of Success: • The number of parents involved in at least one activity increased from 30 percent in the 1994–95 school year to 80 percent in 1996–97. • Parent participation in the school has grown beyond fundraising and clerical work to include participating in school decision-making and classroom instruction, furthering their own educational goals, and contributing to students' learning at home. • Student attendance averages 97 percent. • In two recent years, each grade level scored at or above the 70th percentile in all areas of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills.	Pre-K–5 600	98% Hispanic	95% FRL Schoolwide Program
Clinton Kelly Elementary School **Portland Public Schools** **Portland, OR** **(Small city)**	• In the Family Stories Project, parents and children write and illustrate family histories, which are worked into curriculum; child care is provided for preschool-aged children of participants. • Parents and teachers meet to discuss topics of interest one morning per month. • Parents took an active role in the decision to implement Boyer's Basic School program. • Parents participate in Dorothy Rich's Mega-Skills Project; parents teach other parents how to improve their children's learning skills. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Participation in the Family Stories Project rose from 10 in 1994, its first year, to approximately 35 currently. • Participation in monthly discussions rose from five in 1993–94 to 25 currently. • Twenty participated in first year of Mega-Skills project.	K–5 530	74% white 16% Russian 6% Hispanic 4% Asian	68% FRL Schoolwide Program

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	%Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Maine School Administration District #3 **Thorndike, ME** **(Rural)**	• Telephone hub site at the district high schools links all schools electronically; parents have access to computers through local schools and town offices. • Junior High Potluck Nights include dinner and child care if needed so that seventh- and eighth-grade students and parents can meet with teachers to discuss students' needs and ways that parents can help with their education. • Parents attend off-site retreats with school staff to learn about curriculum and develop strategies for increasing parent involvement; attendance has increased significantly in the past several years. • Family Math and Science Nights introduce parents to school curriculum. • Volunteer coordinators at each school help train and engage parents in school activities. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, $500,000 from the Kellogg Foundation's Rural Leadership Initiative, Noyce Grant for professional development, Federal Reflective Practice Grants, Beacon Grants funded by the National Science Foundation Evidence of Success: • Three potluck nights held in 1995–96, each reaching increasing numbers of families—roughly 60, 75, and 95 families. • Family math and science nights reach about 200 families districtwide each year. • Volunteers performed 3,500 hours of work in 1995–96 school year.	K–12 1,750	99% white	50% FRL
Parent Resource Center **Stockton Unified School District** **Stockton, CA** **(Small city)**	District Parent Resource Center provides: — Resource materials for parents to use at the center or at home, including curriculum materials to use with children, videotapes/cassettes, instructional aids, and books covering a wide range of subjects — Information and materials about state and federal programs — Parenting classes, educational aides workshops, hands-on workshops in math and language arts, and workshops for parents of high-risk students; attendance ranges from 15 to 150 parents, depending on subject. — Transportation and child care services for parents attending the center — Training for individual schools upon request • Mentor parents train both parents and school staff at the school and district level. Approximately 300 parents have become mentors since March 1993, and in 1995–96 they spent 400 hours making presentations. • Parents are planning next year's ongoing training for other parents. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, state funds for school improvement Evidence of Success: • Mentor Parent program trained 61 parents and resulted in more than 5,000 volunteer hours spent in schools during 1996–97 (including nearly 2,000 hours in middle and secondary schools). • Parents volunteering at one middle school contributed 4,000 volunteer hours; the number of conduct code violations at the school dropped from 647 in 1994–95 to 349 in 1995–96, despite a 15 percent increase in the student population. • Several parent participants have become members, board members, and officers of two organizations that advocate parental involvement: The California Association of Compensatory Education and the National Coalition of Title I/Chapter 1 Parents. • Each year the district honors 70–75 outstanding volunteers who together provide 25,000 plus hours of service to students and schools.	K–12 34,020	40% Hispanic 29% Asian American 17% white 13% African American 2% Native American	50% AFDL In 1996-97 all elementary schools will implement schoolwide programs

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Wendell Phillips VPA Magnet School **Kansas City Public Schools** **Kansas City, MO** **(Urban)**	• Parent/community liaison averages 10 home visits per week to get parents' input on important issues and to discuss children's academic or social problems. • Parent/community liaison arranges carpools, drives parents herself, or arranges for parents to take taxis to school. • Parent resource area lends learning kits, educational videos, how-to materials, books, and tapes to support student learning at home. Approximately 10–15 parents visit each day. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, state desegregation funding, community volunteers, donations from local business partners Evidence of Success: • During the 1995–96 school year, approximately 150 parents attended parent/teacher conferences. • An orientation session on state, district, and school policies at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year was attended by 157 parents. • There were no increases in some tested subject areas on the ITBS from 1994-95 to 1995-96; however, first grade made some modest increases (e.g., vocabulary by three percentile points and math concepts by four percentile points); also third and fifth grades saw increases in math.	K–5 400	70% African American 22% white 8% Hispanic and other minority	79% FRL Schoolwide Program Magnet School
The Alliance Schools Initiative **Roosevelt High School** **Dallas Independent School District** **Dallas, TX** **(Statewide initiative implemented in urban school)**	• Alliance Schools Initiative develops a strong community-based constituency of parents, teachers, and community leaders who work to increase student achievement in low-income communities throughout Texas. • Teachers and principals agree to design and implement innovative school reform strategies in collaboration with parents, with each other, and with a network of organizations. • Schools provide training for the surrounding community by involving parents in both improving educational achievement as well as developing a community that values education. • Initiative includes 70 K–12 schools statewide. Roosevelt High School: • In a neighborhood Walk for Success, teams of faculty, parents, and other community members walk door to door to talk with parents about their needs and interests and how to improve the school. • Parents of sophomores attend classes to learn about state tests and to take sample tests. • Parent liaison averages 30–60 telephone calls to parents each day. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, district grants, Investment Capital Fund grants from the Texas Education Agency (which are competitive grants received by many Alliance schools) Evidence of Success: • Approximately 10 parents attended the first Roosevelt PTA meeting in 1993, compared with 200 at the first meeting in 1996. • From 1992–93 to 1995–96, Roosevelt student performance on the state test rose from the 40th to the 81st percentile in reading, from the 16th to the 70th percentile in mathematics, and from the 58th to the 80th percentile in writing. • From 1992–93 to 1994–95, attendance at Roosevelt rose over 11 percent.	9–12 1,067	Roosevelt: 95% African American 5% Hispanic	80% FRL Schoolwide Program

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty[1] and Title I Status
South Bay Union Elementary School District **Imperial Beach, CA** **(Urban)**	• Superintendent, principals, and teachers are evaluated on the extent to which they promote and increase parent participation. • Staff must participate in training on how to interact with and be responsive to parents. • District provides year-round parenting classes in multiple languages. • Parent volunteer coordinator makes home visits to parents and refers parents to social service agencies. • School-based parent centers offer services and information. • Schools guarantee that students will read on grade level by the end of the third grade if parents adhere to the requirements of a school-family compact. • Parenting skills classes address behavior and discipline issues. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Volunteer program hours increased from 103,423 in 1994-95 to 130,301 in 1995-96. • More than 400 students and 250 parents attend the district's annual Read to Me Conference.	K-6 10,000	62% Hispanic 18% White 9% Filipino 11% African American and other minorities	76% FRL
South Delta Elementary School **South Delta School District** **Rolling Fork, MS** **(Rural)**	• Student folder sent home weekly for parent review contains child's corrected work and results of any tests, with space for the teacher to write additional notes to parents. • Parent seminars/workshops address such topics as children's self-esteem, homework, grade-specific learner objectives. • Back-to-School Night inaugurates the home-school partnership, with strategies to maximize parent attendance and inform parents about what their children should learn (e.g., students and parents demonstrate hands-on learning activities specific to each grade level). • End-of-School Night provides parents with a chance to review the school year with staff and to recommend changes for the upcoming year; attendance maximized by having parents pick up student report cards at meeting. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I Evidence of Success: • Attendance at seminars and PTA meetings now averages 50, versus 10 in the past. • Partnership with Welfare Department has increased number of regular volunteers at the parent resource center. • Reading, language arts, and math ITBS scores increased from 1993-94 to 1994-95 for first through fifth grades (e.g., in math, increases ranged from 5 percent for third graders to 12 percent for first-graders; in language arts, increases ranged from 5 percent for second-graders to 12 percent for first-graders). • School recently taken off probation for not meeting requirements for state mean ITBS scores.	pre-K-5 691	85% African American 15% white	90% FRL Schoolwide Program

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Program/School, LEA, City, State	Program Description		Student Characteristics	
	Parent Involvement Activities/Strategies	Grades Served; Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty[1] and Title I Status
Turnbull Learning Academy **San Mateo-Foster City School District** **San Mateo, CA** **(Urban)**	• Magnet program features a school-family compact that requires families to devote 100 hours a year to their children's education. • Parents track their participation through a point system in which they earn an agreed-upon number of points each month for helping with homework, attending school events, and completing weekly literacy activities with their children. • Parents get weekly envelope of activities to complete with their children. • About 60 parents attend parent education workshops each month that address parenting skills; about 20 parents are in attendance at each six-week session offered twice a year in ESL skills. Funding Sources[2]: • Title I Evidence of Success: • In 1994-95 and 1995-96, all families at the school completed their family partnership agreements. • Almost 100 Turnbull parents are active members of the PTA. • From 1993-94 to 1994-95, absenteeism fell from 15 percent to less than 1 percent. • Turnbull received the California Department of Education Distinguished School Award in 1995. • Turnbull was selected as a leadership school during the 1996-97 school year by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative. • Third- and fourth-graders made gains in test scores in reading, mathematics, and language in 1995-96 (e.g., in language, third grade scores increased 12 percentile points and fourth grade 20 percentile points; in math, third grade scores rose 8 percentile points and fourth grade 1 percentile point). Second-graders made a 3 percentile point gain in reading and a 14 percentile point gain in math.	pre-K-5 688	90+ % Hispanic	94% FRL Schoolwide Program Magnet School
Western Middle School **Jefferson County Public Schools** **Louisville, KY** **(Urban)**	• School provides two full-day parent-teacher conferences per year; each teaching team sends home letters, calls parents, and makes home visits to encourage parents to attend; additionally, walk-ins are accommodated and welcomed. • The Youth Service Center is staffed by a parent support coordinator and a home/school coordinator; center staff run all after-school programs and activities and refer students and parents to various community resources; approximately 90 percent of Western students visit the center each school year. • In the current school year, the Right Question Project provides school staff with training on how to structure their parent involvement activities and how to train parents to be better advocates for their children. In fall 1996, an average of two to three parents attended meetings, but the school expects an increase in attendance. • In 1996-97, the school council will include four voting parents and other community members to encourage participatory management (required by KERA). Funding Sources[2]: • Title I, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation grant, Kentucky Education Reform Act funding Evidence of Success: • From fall 1995 to spring 1996, the number of parent conferences conducted jumped from 90 to 280.	6-8 750	69% white 30% African American 1% Pacific Islanders	86% FRL

Appendix C

Contact Information for Profiled Partnership Programs

Appendix C
Contact Information for Profiled Partnership Programs

Atenville Elementary School

Darlene Dalton
Principal
Atenville Elementary School
Route 2, Box 28
Harts, WV 25524
(304) 855-3173

Buffalo Parent Center

Howard Lewis
Assistant Superintendent, Federal Programs
Buffalo Board of Education
427 City Hall
Buffalo, NY 14202
(716) 851-3747

Cane Run Elementary School

Mike Miller
Principal
Cane Run School
3951 Cane Run Road
Louisville, KY 40211
(502) 485-8223

Rodney B. Cox Elementary School

Leila Mizer
Principal
Rodney B. Cox Elementary School
37615 Martin Luther King Boulevard
Dade City, FL 33523
(352) 524-5100

Ferguson Elementary School

Linda Hall
Principal
Ferguson Elementary School
2000 North 7th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 684-5092

Hueco Elementary School

Al Garcia
Interim Principal
Hueco Elementary School
300 Old Hueco Tanks Road
El Paso, TX 79927
(915) 860-3780

Maine School Administration District #3

Deborah Susi
Special Projects Director
Maine School Administrative District #3
P.O. Box 171
Unity, ME 94988
(207) 948-6136

Parent Resource Center
Stockton Unified School District

Jimmie Sasaki
Parent Involvement Specialist
Parent Resource Center
Stockton Unified School District
133 East Mariposa Street
Stockton, CA 95204
(209) 953-4497

Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet

Veoletta S. Maxey
Principal
Phillips Visual and Performing Arts
1619 E. 24th Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64108
(816) 871-1660

Roosevelt High School
(The Alliance Schools Initiative)

Melvin Traylor
Principal
Franklin Roosevelt High School
526 Bonnie View Road
Dallas, TX 75203
(214) 944-3540

Leonora Friend
Education Coordinator
Dallas Area Interfaith
3300 West Mockingbird Lane
Dallas, TX 75235
(214) 351-6595

Appendix D

Resources for Building Successful Partnerships

Appendix D
Resources for Building Successful Partnerships

The following resources include (1) Parent Information and Resource Centers supported by the Goals 2000: Educate America Act; (2) U.S. Department of Education (ED)-sponsored Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers that offer assistance with school reform efforts; (3) ED-sponsored Regional Education Laboratories, including Laboratory publications and research projects related to parent involvement; (4) ED-sponsored Research and Development Centers that offer reports on studies of parent involvement; (5) Educational Resources and Information Center (ERIC) general and clearinghouse information related to school-family partnerships; (6) other publications that profile innovative or effective parent involvement programs or that offer guidance on how to develop them; and (7) ED's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.

Parent Information and Resource Centers; FY 1995 Goals 2000 Grantees

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 authorized state-level parent information and resource centers to aid families and parent educators in strengthening partnerships between parents and professionals in meeting the educational needs of children. The following parent information and resource centers in 28 states received four-year grants in 1995 under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The brief descriptions here, as well as a more extensive profile of each organization are provided by the U.S. Department of Education in the publication, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Parent Information and Resource Centers, Grant Abstracts FY 1995.* To request a copy of the publication call (202) 401–0039. Similar centers are planned for the remaining states.

Native American Parental Assistance Program (NAPAP)
Ahmium Education, Inc.
P.O. Box 366
San Jacinto, CA 92581
(909) 654–2781
Fax: (909) 654–3089
Contact: Ernie Salgado
Provides Native American families with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in their children's education.

Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center
Clayton Foundation
1445 Market Street, Suite 350
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 820–5631
Fax: (303) 820–5656
Contact: Donna Garnett
Disseminates information and provides referrals to parents statewide.

Greater Washington Urban League
3501 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20010
(202) 265–8200
Fax: (202) 265–9878
Contact: Audrey Epperson
Provides services through centrally located and mobile parent training centers. Also offers computer access to parenting information through the National Urban League Parent Network.

Florida Center for Parent Involvement
Center of Excellence
7406 N. Dixon Avenue
Tampa, FL 33604
(813) 238–5873
Fax: (813) 237–3729
Contact: Mary Lindsey
Provides assistance to both minority students of preschool through high school age and their families.

Parent Training Resource Assistance Center
Community Partnership for Education
901 N. Jackson Street
Albany, GA 31702-1726
(912) 888–0999
Fax: (912) 888–2664
Contact: Jo Granberry
Helps low-income parents in southwest Georgia become more involved with their children's education.

Parental Assistance Centers
Parents and Children Together
1475 Linapuni Street, Room 117-A
Honolulu, HI 96819
(808) 847-3285
Fax: (808) 841-1485
Contact: Helenann Lauber
Offers services to parents through Parental Assistance Centers in 11 schools on 3 Hawaiian islands.

Iowa Parent Resource Center
The Higher Plain, Inc.
1025 Penkridge Drive
Iowa City, IA 52246
(319) 354-5606
Fax: (319) 354-5345
Contact: Ron Mirr
Provides training and technical assistance to parent groups and educational programs throughout Iowa, particularly for low-income families and their children.

Parental Assistance Program
Licking Valley Community Action Program
203 High Street
Flemingsburg, KY 41041
(606) 845-0081
Fax: (606) 845-0418
Contact: Judy L. Planck
Distributes information and provides services to families in low-income communities.

Family Resource Project
Maine Parent Federation, Inc.
P.O. Box 2067
Augusta, ME 04338-2067
(207) 582-2504
Fax: (207) 582-3638
Contact: Christine Snook
Provides information and workshops to parents and educators in Maine.

Parenting Resource and Support Partnership
Child Care Connection, Inc.
332 W. Edmonston Drive
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 279-1773
Fax: (301) 294-4962
Contact: Carol Walsh
Offers varied programs, including telephone assistance services for parents and professional support workshops for educators, to support parents in their role as primary teachers.

Massachusetts Parent Training and Empowerment Project
Cambridge Partnership for Public Education
MIT Building 20, Room 129 B
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 253-7093
Fax: (617) 258-5573
Contact: Dr. Sandra J. Willens
Helps low-income and limited English-speaking parents to become advocates for their children through parent training.

Families United for Success
Life Services Systems for Communities and Schools
272 East 8th Street, Suite B
Holland, MI 49423
(616) 396-7566
Fax: (616) 396-6893
Contact: Deanna DePree
Works with service providers on a case-by-case basis to train parents to teach their children. Provides referrals as needed.

Families and Schools Together (FAST) Forward
PACER Center, Inc.
4826 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55417-1098
(612) 827-2966
Fax: (612) 827-3065
Contact: Sharman Davis Jamison
Disseminates information about parental involvement to the general public, low-income families, and minority communities. In addition, offers workshops and in-person consultations to parents and professionals.

Missouri Partnership for Parenting Assistance
Literacy Investment for Tomorrow (LIFT)
300 South Broadway
St. Louis, MO 63102
(314) 421-1970
Fax: (314) 539-5170
Contact: Diana S. Schmidt
Offers parental involvement programs through two Family Literacy centers and disseminates information to parents and professionals through the ParentLink 1-800 number.

The Center for Healthy Families
Sunrise Children's Hospital Foundation
3196 South Maryland Parkway, #307
Las Vegas, NV 89109
(702) 731-8373
Fax: (702) 731-8372
Contact: Leisa Whittum

Provides prenatal and parenting education to families in southern Nevada.

Building Family Strengths
Parent Information Center
P.O. Box 2405
Concord, NH 03302-2405
(603) 224-7005
(800) 947-7005 (NH only)
Fax: (603) 224-4365
Contact: Deborah Bennis

Offers training, informational workshops, and comprehensive social services to parents and educators.

Prevent Child Abuse
New Jersey Chapter, Inc.
35 Halsey Street, Suite 300
Newark, NJ 07102-3031
(201) 643-3710
Fax: (201) 643-9222
Contact: Sharon J.B. Copeland

Brings family support and parent education programs to local communities by serving as a facilitator for three programsParents as Teachers, Effective Parenting—Information for Children (EPIC), and Teens as Effective Mothers (TEAM).

CONNECTIONS
Geneseo Migrant Center, Inc.
P.O. Box 545
Geneseo, NY 14454
(716) 245-5681
Fax: (716) 245-5680
Contact: Patricia M. Edwards

Develops materials for migrant workers, their families, and educators on a statewide and national basis.

Parent Partners
Exceptional Children's Assistance Center
P.O. Box 16
Davidson, NC 28036
(704) 892-1321
Fax: (704) 892-5028
Contact: Claudia Olivierre

Increases involvement of North Carolina's families in all levels of their children's education through the Parents in Partnership Project (PIPP).

Ohio Parent Information Resource Center
Lighthouse Youth Services, Inc.
4837 Ward Street
Cincinnati, OH 45227
(513) 272-0273
Fax: (513) 272-0284
Contact: Elizabeth Yaryan

Provides statewide information dissemination and training sessions to increase parents' knowledge of and confidence in child-rearing activities, such as teaching and nurturing their young children.

Parents As Partners
1401 NE 70th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73111
(405) 478-4078
Fax: (405) 947-3793

Offers parent information and general age-appropriate materials statewide, and provides referrals for services in rural and urban areas of Oklahoma County.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Parental Assistance Center Project
Community Action Southwest
22 West High Street
Waynesburg, PA 15370
(412) 852-2893
Fax: (412) 627-7713
Contact: Barbara Mooney

Provides parenting workshops and information resource rooms to low-income families in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Black Hills Parent Resource Network
Black Hills Special Services Foundation
P.O. Box 218
Sturgis, SD 57785
(605) 347-4467
Fax: (605) 347-5223
Contact: Mary Baumeister

Coordinates a system of information and support to enhance parents' efforts to nurture their children's growth and development and to connect families with professionals and resources.

Parents First
NashvilleREAD, Inc.
421 Great Circle Road, Suite 104
Nashville, TN 37228
(615) 255-4982
Fax: (615) 255-4783
Contact: Marilyn Tucker

Targets minority parents, parents with limited English speaking ability, and parents who are severely economically and educationally disadvantaged for literacy and parent training services.

Family Focus Project
Mental Health Association of Texas
8401 Shoal Creek Boulevard
Austin, TX 78757
(512) 454-3706
Fax: (512) 454-3725
Contact: Mary Ellen Nudd

Serves high-risk populations, including teen parents, areas with high rates of juvenile crime, and underserved populations with two parent training programs—Parents as Teachers and the Practical Parent Education Program.

Vermont Family Resource Partnership
Addison County Parent Child Center
P.O. Box 646
Middlebury, VT 05753
(802) 388-3171
Fax: (802) 388-1590
Contact: Sue Harding

Operates Parents as Teachers programs, parent education programs, and parent mentoring programs throughout Vermont.

Children's Home Society of Washington
201 South 34th Street
Tacoma, WA 98408
(206) 472-3355
Fax: (206) 475-8377
Contact: Marilyn Littlejohn

Operates family support centers and readiness-to-learn programs in addition to working collaboratively with other community organizations to ensure the delivery of early childhood services.

Parents Plus of Wisconsin
P.O. Box 452
328 Sixth Street
Menasha, WI 54952-0452
(414) 729-1787
Fax: (414) 751-5038
Contact: Susan Werley

Through regional family resource centers across Wisconsin, provides training to parents of children of all ages.

Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers

The role of the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers is to support and assist states, school districts, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of funds under the IASA by providing technical assistance in : (1) implementing school reform to improve teaching and learning for all students; (2) adopting, adapting, and implementing promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning; and (3) coordinating IASA recipients' school reform programs with other educational plans and activities so that all students, particularly students at risk of educational failure, are provided opportunities to meet challenging state content and performance standards. For more information, call the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center Consortium at (608) 263-4220 or any of the following centers.

REGION I: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont
Dr. Vivian Guilfoy, Director
Education Development Center Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02158-1060
Telephone: (617) 969-7100 ext. 2310
Fax: (617) 332-4318
E-mail: viviang@edc.org

REGION II: New York State
Dr. LaMar P. Miller, Executive Director
New York Technical Assistance Center
New York University
32 Washington Place
New York, NY 10003
Telephone: (212) 998-5110
Fax: (212) 995-4199/4041
E-mail: millrla@is2nyu.edu

REGION III: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania
Dr. Charlene Rivera, Director
George Washington University
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209
Telephone: (703) 528-3588
Fax: (703) 528-5973
E-mail: crivera@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu

REGION IV: Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia
Dr. Pamela Buckley, Director
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.
P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325-1348
Telephone: (304) 347-0441
Fax: (304) 347-0489
E-mail: buckleyp@ael.org

REGION V: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Lousiana, and Mississippi
Dr. Hai Tran, Director
Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center
3330 North Causeway Boulevard
Suite 430
Metairie, LA 70002-3573
Telephone: (504) 838-6861
Fax: (504) 831-5242
E-mail: htran@sedl.org

REGION VI: Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin
Dr. Minerva Coyne, Director
University of Wisconsin
1025 West Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706
Telephone: (608) 263-4326
Fax: (608) 263-3733
E-mail: mcoyne@macc.wisc.edu

REGION VII: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma
Dr. John E. Steffens, Director
University of Oklahoma
555 Constitution Street, Suite 128
Norman, OK 73037-0005
Telephone: (405) 325-1711
Fax: (405) 325-1824
E-mail: steffens@uoknor.edu

REGION VIII: Texas
Dr. Maria Robledo Montecel
Executive Director
Dr. Albert Cortez, Site Director
Intercultural Development Research Association
5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350
San Antonio, TX 78228-1190
Telephone: (210) 684-8180
Fax: (210) 684-5389
E-mail: cmontecl@txdirect.net
acortez@txdirect.net

REGION IX: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah
Dr. Paul E. Martinez, Director
New Mexico Highlands University
121 Tijeras, NE, Suite 2100
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Telephone: (505) 242-7447
Fax: (505) 242-7558
E-Mail: martinez@cesdp.nmhu.ed

REGION X: Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming
Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams
Executive Director
Mr. Carlos Sundermann, Director
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 Southwest Main Street
Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
Telephone: (503) 275-9479
Fax: (503) 275-9625
E-mail: simone@nwrel.org

REGION XI: Northern California
Dr. Beverly Farr, Director
Far West Laboratory for Educational Research
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
Telephone: (415) 565-3009
Fax: (415) 565-3012 or 2024
E-mail: bfarr@wested.org

REGION XII: Southern California (Counties: Imperial, Inyo, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego)
Dr. Henry Mothner, Director
Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway
Downey, CA 90242-2890
Telephone: (310) 922-6343
Fax: (310) 940-1798
E-mail:
mothner_henry@lacoe.edu

REGION XIII: Alaska
Dr. Bill Buell, Director
South East Regional Resource Center
210 Ferry Way, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801
Telephone: (907) 586-6806
Fax: (907) 463-3811
E-mail: akrac@ptialaska.net

REGION XIV: Florida, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands
Dr. Trudy Hensley, Director
Educational Testing Service
1979 Lake Side Parkway
Suite 400
Tucker, GA 30084
Telephone: (770) 723-7443
Fax: (770) 723-7436
E-mail: thensley@ets.org

REGION XV: American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau
Dr. Hilda Heine, Project Director
Pacific Region Educational Laboratory
828 Fort Street Mall, Suite 500
Honolulu, HI 96813
Telephone: (808) 533-6000
Fax: (808) 533-7599
E-mail: heineh@prel.hawaii.edu

Regional Educational Laboratories

Regional Laboratories help schools and districts in their region find solutions to problems. They also offer technical assistance and are a resource of information, particularly in their specialty areas. Indicated below are family involvement resources and publications available from individual labs.

During the last contract period (1990–1995), most of the laboratories collaborated on the development of *Continuity in Early Education: A Framework for Home, School, and Community Linkages* (1995). This document is intended for use by communities to support and facilitate the continuity of services for children ages birth – 8, and their families.

Northeast and Islands Laboratory at Brown (LAB)
222 Richmond Street, Suite 300
Providence, RI 02903–4226
Phone: (401) 274–9548 or
(800) 521–9550
Fax: (401) 421–7650
E-mail: LAB@brown.edu
Internet: http://www.lab.brown.edu
Director: Dr. Phil Zarlengo, Acting
States Served: CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT, PR, VI
Specialty: Language and Cultural Diversity
Program Officer: Lynn Spencer (202) 219–2179
lynn_spencer@ed.gov

RMC Research, one of the LAB's partners, will undertake a multi-year effort to explore ways to build parent-community-business support for school reforms that focus on high achievement for all children. The intent of this applied research project is to identify strategies and materials to build parental and public support for the standards-based school reform movement.

Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success (LSS)
Temple University, CRHDE
933 Ritter Annex
13th St. and Cecil B. Moore Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19122
Phone: (215) 204–3030
Fax: (215) 204–5130
E-mail: lss@vm.temple.edu
Internet:
http://www.temple.edu/departments/LSS
Director: Dr. Margaret C. Wang
States Served: DE, MD, NJ, PA, DC
Specialty Area: Urban Education
Program Officer: Greg Dennis
(202) 219–1919
gregory_dennis@ed.gov

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)
Post Office Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325–1348
Phone: (304) 347–0400 or
(800) 624–9120
Fax: (304) 347–0487
E-mail: aelinfo@ael.org
Internet: http://www.ael.org
Director: Dr. Terry L. Eidell
States Served: KY, TN, VA, WV
Specialty Area: Rural Education
Program Officer: Kathy Fuller
(202) 219–2281
kathy_fuller@ed.gov

Relevant publications include: *Family Connections 1* (1992) for preschool and *Family Connections 2* (1993) for kindergarten and early primary grades. These guides, designed to help families be more effectively involved in their children's education, can be used by staff conducting home visits, teachers who want to send the weekly guides home with students, and program staff who can mail them directly to interested parents. The weekly guides include a message to parents on topics such as the importance of reading aloud, effective discipline, and using the public library, as well as suggestions for developmentally appropriate activities parents and children can do together.

Parents and Schools: From Visitors to Partners (1993). This book, part of the National Education Association's Restructuring Series, draws on the experiences of educators and parents who have developed successful home-school partnerships. It includes a review of research on parent involvement, strategies to initiate and maintain effective two-way communication between home and school, in-depth descriptions of exemplary parent involvement programs, a summary of parent involvement practices found in successful school programs, and a list of resources educators and parents can use to plan, implement, and evaluate partnership efforts.

Partnerships: Sharing Responsibility for Children (1993). This issue of Policy Briefs presents the need for schools, families, and communities to work together for children, describes actions schools can take to involve families and communities, and suggests what policy makers can do to promote and support effective partnerships. It concludes with a review of parent involvement activities in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, and highlights exemplary parent involvement programs in each of the four states.

Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE)
Post Office Box 5367
Greensboro, NC 27435
Phone: (910) 334–3211 or
(800) 755–3277
Fax: (910) 334–3268
E-mail: info@SERVE.org
Internet: http://www.serve.org
Director: Dr. Roy H. Forbes
States Served: AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC
Specialty: Early Childhood Education
Program Officer: Deborah Williams
(202) 219–2204
deborah_williams@ed.gov

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Relevant publications include:
Supporting Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education: A Guide for Business (1992) is a publication that shows how businesses and other organizations can increase parent and community involvement in young children's education. It describes progressive efforts, such as instituting family leave policies, establishing a family-oriented philosophy, working with teachers and students, and providing other assistance to schools. Many examples of companies with family-friendly policies are featured. This publication is scheduled to be revised in late 1997.

Families and Schools: An Essential Partnership (1996) is intended for pre-K through third grade educators who are interested in developing effective family involvement strategies, programs, and partnerships. It addresses the new evolving role of families in young children's education and suggests practices educators might use to build strong family-school partnerships. This document also provides descriptions of exemplary programs, suggestions for implementation, and information regarding contact personnel.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521–1480
Phone: (630) 571–4700
Fax: (630) 571–4716
E-mail: info@ncrel.org
Internet: http://www.ncrel.org
Director: Dr. Jeri Nowakowski
States Served: IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, OH, WI
Specialty Area: Educational Technology
Program Officer: Mary Campbell
(202) 219–2130
mary_campbell@ed.gov

Relevant publications and activities include:
NCREL has prepared a literature synthesis on the School-Family Partnership, that cites research done on the importance of parent involvement in increasing student achievement and improving students' attitudes. Topics covered in the synthesis include supporting teacher-parent relationships; roles for parents; at-home activities; how comprehensive parent involvement efforts need to be; parent involvement and grade level; and working with minority families.

NCREL operates "Pathways to School Improvement," an Internet server. Pathways provides information on the latest in education research, synthesized and arranged in varying levels of depth. Information on parent and family involvement is available through Pathways and new materials are added monthly. You can reach Pathways through the Internet at:
http://www.ncrel.org/ncrel/sdrs/pathways.htm

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)
211 East Seventh Street
Austin, TX 78701–3281
Phone: (512) 476–6861
Fax: (512) 476–2286
E-mail: jpollard@sedl.org
Internet: http://www.sedl.org
Director: Dr. Wesley Hoover
States Served: AR, LA, NM, OK, TX
Specialty: Language and Cultural Diversity
Program Officer: Gil Garcia
(202) 219–2144
gil_garcia@ed.gov

Relevant publications include:
Building Home, School, and Community Partnerships (1995) is a set of three booklets that identify key issues in the development of home, school, and community partnerships and provide lessons learned from five demonstration sites.

Directory of Partnership Programs (1995) is an updated directory for schools, parent organizations and community agencies in the region interested in information about how partnerships can address the needs of young children and youth who are at risk of dropping out of school.

Guides to Partnering and Early Childhood (1985) is a set of six Positive Parent Booklets written with parents in mind. They impart valuable skills to parents of younger children. One booklet, for example, describes how children learn by watching and helping out. Another describes strategies parents can use to help their children learn basic reading skills.

Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)
2550 South Parker Road
Aurora, CO 80014–1678
Phone: (303) 337–0990
Fax: (303) 337–3005
E-mail: info@mcrel.org
Internet: http://www.mcrel.org
Director: Dr. J. Timothy Waters
States Served: CO, KS, MO, NE, ND, WY
Specialty: Curriculum, Learning and Instruction
Program Officer: Annora Bryant
(202) 219–2087
annora_bryant@ed.gov

Relevant publications include:
Increasing Parental Involvement: A Key to Student Achievement, by Dan Jesse, is a brief how-to document that includes a "Checklist for Improving Parental Involvement" for schools to use. The text can be reviewed on the Internet at:
http://www.mcrel.org/products/noteworthy/danj.html

WestEd
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
Phone: (415) 565–3000
Fax: (415) 565–3012
E-mail: tross@WestEd.org
Internet: http://www.WestEd.org
Acting Director: Dr. Edward Myers
States Served: AZ, CA, NV, UT
Specialty: Assessment and Accountability
Program Officer: Sharon Horn
(202) 219–2203
sharon_horn@ed.gov

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)
101 SW Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204–3212
Phone: (503) 275–9500 or
(800) 547–6339
Fax: (503) 275–9489
E-mail: info@nwrel.org
Internet: http://www.nwrel.org
Director: Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams
States Served: AK, ID, MT, OR, WA
Specialty Area: School Change Processes
Program Officer: Carol Mitchell
(202) 219–2128
carol_j._mitchell@ed.gov

Relevant publications and services include:
NWREL's Child and Family Program staff provides training on four comprehensive integrated services modules in *Working Respectfully with Parents: A Practical Guide for Educators and Human Service Workers*. Module topics are: The Child, the Family, and the Community: Developing Partnerships with Families; Creating Family-Friendly Schools and Home, School, and Community Partnerships.

The NWREL's website has a forum specifically for parents. "Parents: Let's Talk," identifies resources and helpful hints for parents who want to be involved in their children's education. The text can be reviewed on the Internet at:
http://www.nwrel.org/comm/monthly/together.html

School and Community: Towards a Guide to Parent Involvement is a guide produced in 1990 that offers an array of tips and strategies for breaking down school/parent barriers and bringing parents into their children's educational lives. The guide identifies steps to design and implement effective parent involvement efforts, clearly outlining roles and responsibilities for each key player.

Pacific Region Educational Laboratory (PREL)
828 Fort Street Mall, Suite 500
Honolulu, HI 96813–4321
Phone: (808) 533–6000
Fax: (808) 533–7599
E-mail: askprel@prel.hawaii.edu
Internet: http://prel.hawaii.edu
Director: Dr. John W. Kofel
Region Served: HI, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau
Specialty: Language and Cultural Diversity
Program Officer: Joe Wilkes
(202) 219–2186
joe_wilkes@ed.gov

Relevant materials include:
PREL recently produced an audiotape series entitled "Reading Aloud to Children." This series, which was created in Hawaiian/English, Marshallese/English, Pohnpeian/English, and Samoan/English, targets parents and families. Each tape includes a rationale on the importance of reading aloud to children and a demonstration of a read-aloud session with local stories.

Pacific Center staff are facilitating the networking process of all programs within the Hawaii Department of Education that contain family and parent support components. A curriculum framework for adult literacy is being developed with the Waipahu Ohana Center.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Research and Development Centers

Many studies on family involvement in education have been sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, especially through the OERI Research and Dvelopment Centers. These centers conduct five-year programs of studies on various important topics in education. Some centers have focused on studies of family involvement and related issues. The most recent include:

Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. Headquartered at Boston University (BU) between 1990 and 1995, this center was co-directed by Don Davies at BU and Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University. Its mission focused on producing new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. More than 50 reports, guidebooks, classroom materials, videos, surveys, and other products by center researchers are now available to assist researchers, educators, families, and others.

Contact: Diane Diggs
Publications Department
Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
Telephone: (410) 516-8808
Fax: (410) 516-8890

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships. This center at Johns Hopkins University, directed by Joyce Epstein, is a successor to the above center at Boston University. Its mission is to increase understanding of partnership practices that help children succeed at all grade levels and in all types of settings. This center is funded in part through the current OERI-funded Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) at Johns Hopkins University. Projects of CRESPAR and the center include the development of research on the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools. The Network guides school, district, and state leaders and teams of educators, parents, and others to improve school, family, and community partnerships. Other studies focus on the effects of partnerships on students, families, and schools, and the development of pre-service, in-service, and advanced courses in partnerships for teachers and administrators.

Contact: Karen Clark Salinas
Communications Director
Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
Telephone: (410) 516-8808
Fax: (410) 516-8890

Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence. This center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, opened in 1996 and has a program of studies on family, peers, and community. The studies include those with a focus on: (1) coordinating family, peers, school, and community during early adolescence, and (2) immigrant parents' computer literacy, as it relates to student learning.

Contact: Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence
1156 High Street
University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
Telephone: (408) 459-3500
Fax: (408) 459-3502

Educational Resources and Information Center (ERIC) Information Related to School-Family Partnerships

ERIC is an ED-sponsored national education information network of clearinghouses responsible for developing, maintaining, and providing access to the world's largest education literature database. To access information, topical packages, and referrals on specific educational practices, research, and resources, contact:

ACCESS ERIC
1600 Research Boulevard, 5F, Rockville, MD 20850-3172
PHONE: (301) 251-5789
FAX: (301) 309-2084
TOLL-FREE: (800) LET-ERIC
E-MAIL: acceric@ed.gov
GOPHER: aspensys3.aspensys.com:70/11/education/eric
URL: http://www.aspensys.com/eric
DIRECTOR: Lynn Smart, Information Specialist

ERIC clearinghouses include 16 contractors from the academic and not-for-profit sectors. Each is responsible for collecting the significant educational literature within their particular scope of interest area (e.g., family literacy), selecting the highest quality and most relevant material, processing (i.e., cataloging indexing, abstracting) the selected items for input to the database, and also for synthesizing the literature and providing information analysis products (e.g., Digests) and various user services.

The National Parent Information Network. The National Parent Information Network (NPIN) is a project of the ERIC Clearinghouse system. The NPIN is an Internet-based information network for parents, and for organizations and individuals who support parents. Those services include:

- Parent News—an award winning Internet resource, updated monthly, contains current articles, books, organizations, community programming ideas, and interesting websites.
- Parents AskERIC—a question and answer service for parents, teachers, administrators, and parent education specialists.
- Parenting Discussion List—an informal list of parents, and professionals who work with parents, discussing current parenting issues.
- Resources for Parents, and for Those Who Work with Parents—includes a variety of current journals, articles and books on family life, child development, and parenting from birth through early adolescence.
- Families, Technology, and Education Conference—from October 30—November 1, 1997, in the Chicago area, this conference will address technology related issues at the start of the twenty-first century.

For more information about NPIN, contact:

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Children's Research Center
51 Getty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820–7469
Telephone: (217) 333–1386
Toll Free: (800) 583–4135
Fax: (217) 333–3767
E-mail: ericeece@uiuc.edu
The National Parent Information Network:
http://ericps.ere.uiuc.edu/npin/npinhome.html
ERIC/EECE: http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/ericeece.html

Another clearinghouse that offers information specifically related to elementary and secondary school-family partnerships is:

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication (CS)
Indiana University
Smith Research Center, Suite 150
2805 East 10th Street
Bloomington, IN 47408–2698
Telephone: (812) 855–5847
Toll Free: (800) 759–4723
Fax: (812) 855–4220
E-mail: ericcs@ucs.indiana.edu

A Family Literacy Center, offering both materials and workshops to parents and teachers, includes such topics as:

- Making parents feel welcome in school
- Giving parents easy ways to help their children
- Showing teachers how to benefit by involving parents
- Fulfilling parent involvement mandates

Other Publications

The following publications provide profiles of innovative and effective parent involvement programs and/or offer guidance on program development.

Ban, J. (1993). *Parents assuring student success (PASS)*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Describes a program in Indiana that successfully motivated and involved low-income families in their children's education.

Contact Information:
National Education Service
1252 Loesch Road
P.O. Box 8, Station T6
Bloomington, IN 47402-0008
(800) 733-6786
Fax: (812) 336-7790
Phone: (202) 364-4114

Building capacity for partnership through networking: Region IV, Title I school districts of Southwest Florida.

Provides examples of action plans for parent involvement programs and sample parent-school compacts developed by schools in Southwest Florida.

Contact Information:
Claud E. Leiby, Region IV Supervisor
3135 N. Washington Boulevard
Sarasota, FL 34234-6299
(941) 359-5650
Fax: (941) 359-5813

Creating healthy communities. (1996, August). *Source*, pp. 1-3.

Provides profiles of the Creating Healthy Communities program—a program that helps communities work with individuals, organizations, and their leaders to create healthy environments for youth.

Contact information:
(800) 888-7828
(612) 376-8955
Fax: (612) 376-8956

Epstein, J.L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76: 701-712.

This article outlines the six major types of involvement, their challenges, and expected results to help schools develop comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships that help meet goals for school improvement and student success.

Contact information for all publications authored by Joyce Epstein:
Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning
Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

Epstein, J.L., Coates, L., Salinas, K.C., Sanders, M.G., & Simon, B.S. (in press). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This handbook provides research and practical guidelines for schools, districts, and state departments of education to plan, implement, and improve programs of school-family-community partnerships, including the development of an action team and the application of the framework of six types of involvement.

Epstein, J.L. Salinas, K.C. (1993). *School and Family Partnerships: Surveys and Summaries*. Baltimore, MD: Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.

This document includes questionnaires for teachers, parents, and students as well as guidance on how schools can summarize survey data and use it to build and strengthen school-family partnerships.

Fruchter, N., Galletta, A., & White, J. L. (1992). *New directions in parent involvement.* New York: Academy for Educational Development.

Identifies and analyzes 18 recently developed programs or reforms that stress effective parental involvement as a means to improve student academic achievement, restructure schools, and reform public education, particularly in schools serving low-income and disadvantaged students.

Making the Connection

A weekly report that examines the efforts of educators, policymakers, and telecommunications companies to use technologies to break down barriers that frequently separate schools from homes and educators from parents.

Contact Information:
Education Week
Making the Connection
4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 250
Washington, DC 20008

National Education Service (Producer). (1996) *Partners toward achievement: A home-school-community partnership.* [video]. Bloomington, IN: Producer.
A two-video set that includes interviews with educators, parents, and students, and focuses on the practical strategies that can bring about more effective communication and collaboration between parents and teachers.

Contact Information:
National Education Service
1252 Loesch Road
P.O. Box 8, Station T6
Bloomington, IN 47402–0008
(800) 733–6786
Fax: (812) 336–7790
Phone: (202) 364–4114

Rioux, J. W. & Berla, N. (1993). Innovations in parent and family involvement. Princeton, NJ: Eye on Education.

Highlights innovative parental involvement programs for diverse populations from pre-kindergarten through high school, and provides strategies for creating successful programs.

Rogers, M. (1995). *Planning for Title I programs: Guidelines for parents, advocates, and educators.* Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education.

Provides timely information on Title I guidelines: what the law says, how to promote wider involvement, the roles of state and local education agencies, how schools can reach and assist parents, and organizations that parents can turn to for help.

Contact Information:
Center for Law and Education
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 510
Washington, DC 20009
Fax: (202) 986–6648
Phone: (202) 986–3000

U.S. Department of Education. (1993). *Building school-family partnerships for learning: Workshops for urban educators.* Washington, DC: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 364–651)

Contains materials for five workshops with leader guides, transparency masters, and handouts designed for local staff development activities in elementary education (K–6). The publication contains the following workshops: Homework and Home Learning Activities; School Programs and Practices; Families as Learning Environments; Communication Skills and Strategies; and School District Policies and Supports for School-Family Partnerships.

U.S. Department of Education. (1996). *Goals 2000: Educate America Act parent information and resource centers grant abstracts FY 1995*. Washington, DC: Author.

This list of 28 parent information and resource centers located in states across the country includes descriptions of the services each center provides. (See State Parent Information and Resource Centers: appendix B.)

U.S. Department of Education. (1996). *Reaching all families: Creating family-friendly schools*. (August, 1996). Washington, DC: Author.

This booklet contain strategies for and examples of parent outreach activities such as the fall open house, parent-teacher conferences, parent resource centers, and positive telephone communications.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). *Strong familes, strong schools: Building community partnerships for learning*. Washington, DC: Author.

This booklet describes how schools, businesses, communities, states and federal programs can help parents take a more active role in their child's learning.

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education

"Better Education is Everybody's Business"
U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley

What is the Partnership's mission?

- To increase opportunities for families to be more involved in their children's learning at school and at home;
- To use family-school-community partnerships to strengthen schools and improve student achievement

What are activities that the Partnership supports? Partnership members support activities in their own local community focused on bringing the public back into the schools and get involved in several nationwide activities.

- **READ*WRITE*NOW!**, an intensive summer compenent to the **American Reads Challenge**, to encourage children's reading and writing with a reading partner 30 minutes a day.
- **America Goes Back to School: Answering the President's Call to Action** encourages every American to go back to school each fall to share their talents and experiences. Taking the challenge means addressing local educational concerns and making a year-long commitment to learning.
- **Getting Ready for College Early**, an initiative to encourage all students to take the courses they need to enter college and to inform parents of the sequence of courses their child needs to take, as well as the financial planning involved. To be launched in winter 1998.

Who are the partners? More than 3000 family, school, community, employer and religious groups comprise the partnership. Each of the these groups have come together to pledge support for student learning to high standards as actualized through involvement in nationwide activities and other area of concern idientified by the Partner groups. The Partners represent a growing grassroots movement across this country and are organized into four groups:

- *Family-School Partners for Learning* support home-school partnerships where communication and mutual responsibility for children's learning to high standards are key.
- *Employers for Learning* adopt family- and student-friendly business practices, such as providing leave time to attend parent conferences and volunteering in school, providing parent training and child care, and working with neighborhood schools.
- *Community/Cultural Organizations for Learning* support learning communities through organized before- and after-school and summer activities, volunteer in the schools during the school day, help to make streets safe for children, and support supervised recreational activities.
- *Religious Organizations for Learning* provide parent education programs and reading tutoring programs for children, sponsor cultural programs, make their buildings available for organized learning and recreational activities, and support out-of-school learning.

What are the benefits from joining the Partnership? Partners improve their effectiveness by connecting with other groups and drawing on each other's strengths. The benefits of being part of a coordinated effort are key. Partners learn about and share the latest and best practices from other Partner organizations. Recognition is earned for organizations' visible commitments at the national, state, and local levels. Members of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education receive Partnership publications and support on an on-going basis.

How can your organization join the Partnership? If your organization wants to become a Partner for Learning, see the Family-School Partnership Promise on the next page. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for more information about becoming a member. Website: <www.ed.gov/Family>

PARTNERSHIP
for Family
Involvement
in Education

Join the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education...

Family-School Partnership Promise

Families and schools across America are increasingly accepting mutual responsibility for children's learning. When families are involved in children's learning, at school and at home, schools work better and students learn more. Schools and families are working with employers and community organizations to develop local partnerships that support a safe school environment where students learn to challenging standards. By working together, exchanging information, sharing decision-making, and collaborating in children's learning, everyone can contribute to the education process.

Coming together as families, local school board governance, administration, teachers and school staff, we form this partnership and affirm the importance of family involvement in children's learning. We pledge to:

- Share responsibility at school and at home to give students a better education and a good start in life.
- Our school will be welcoming to families; reach out to families before problems arise; offer challenging courses; create safe and drug-free learning environments; organize tutoring and other opportunities to improve student learning; and support families to be included in the school decision-making process.
- Our families will monitor student attendance, homework completion and television watching; take the time to talk with and listen to their children; become acquainted with teachers, administrators and school staff; read with younger children and share a good book with a teen; volunteer in school when possible; and participate in the school decision-making process.
- Promote effective two-way communication between families and schools, by schools reducing educational jargon and breaking down cultural and language barriers and by families staying in touch with the school.
- Provide opportunities for families to learn how to help their children succeed in school and for school staff to work with families.
- Support family-school efforts to improve student learning by reviewing progress regularly and strengthening cooperative actions.

We would like to become a member of the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning. We commit to family-friendly practices and will work with others to form partnerships that support children's learning. (Please type or print the following.)

School Name: _____

School Adress: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

School Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____ **E-mail:** _____

Principal: _____ **Signature:** _____

Parent Organization Representative: _____ **Signature:** _____

Teacher Representative: _____ **Signature:** _____

School Staff Representative: _____ **Signature:** _____

Contact Person: _____ **Title:** _____ **Contact Phone:** _____

Send to: Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-8173 or fax to 202-205-9133 to receive your **Family-School Partnership Promise Certificate.**

ISBN 0-16-049254-8

90000

9 780160 492549

United States
Department of Education
Washington, DC 20208–5521

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use, $300

Postage and Fees Paid
U.S. Department of Education
Permit No. G–17

Standard Mail (B)

AR 97–7022